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### Felix Vallotton's Intimates: "Le Cauchemar d'un Erudit"

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FELIX VALLOTTON'S INTIMITES:

"LE CAUCHEMAR D'UN ERUDIT"

by

Lise Marie Holst

B.A., University of Rochester, 1975

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Oberlin College  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the Degree of Master of Arts  
in the Department of Art

1979

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JA.....Jean Adhémar, Toulouse-Lautrec: His Complete Lithographs and Drypoints, New York, 1965.  
Sch.....Gustav Schiefler, Edvard Munchs Graphische Kunst, Dresden, 1923.  
VG.....Maxime Vallotton and Charles Goerg, Félix Vallotton, Catalogue Raisoné de l'oeuvre gravé et lithographié, Lausanne-Paris, 1972.

(LMH.....photograph taken by author)

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## Introduction

At the beginning of the last decade of the nineteenth century, amidst lively experimentation in the graphic arts, there emerged in Paris an artist whose striking woodcuts soon brought him the recognition and the esteem of his contemporaries. Félix Vallotton's woodcuts represented to many a uniquely modern application of the venerable technique of printing from a carved block of wood. Within a year of his first experiments in the medium, Vallotton was highly praised in print by Octave Uzanne, in an article entitled "La Renaissance de la gravure sur bois: un néoxylographe," as the progressive figure in the field.<sup>1</sup>

Vallotton (1865-1925) was not the first artist to revive the practice of carving in the side grain of the woodblock, instead of in the end-wood, as professional wood engravers had been for years; a revival of sorts of the technique by artists was already underway by 1891 when Vallotton cut his first blocks.<sup>2</sup> However, he quickly developed a personal style, sensitive to the inherent character of the technique, based on broad areas of pure black and white, and produced some of the most original woodcut prints of the period.<sup>3</sup> His break with convention and with those contemporaries who were also experimenting with woodcut was dramatic enough to earn him Raymond Bouyer's praise, in 1899, as the "Robespierre" of a woodcut revolution.<sup>4</sup>

While Vallotton's woodcuts made his reputation in the 1890s, subsequent critical analysis of his graphic art has been very uneven. Many articles followed Uzanne's of 1892 in praising the artist's work, most in



very general terms. But in 1898, the year his Intimités were published, Vallotton became the first, among all the artists associated with the Nabis, to have a monograph on his work published.<sup>5</sup> Julius Meier-Graefe's study of the artist's woodcuts, which does not take into account the Intimités, is a product of that critic and art historian's deep interest, in the late 1890s, in the decorative arts. Meier-Graefe's bias, however, manifested in an analysis that is restricted to form at the expense of content, prevents him from coming to terms with his subject's work in a satisfying manner.<sup>6</sup>

After Vallotton turned his energies almost entirely to painting, around 1900, and until his death in 1925, very little was written on the woodcuts. In 1927 a slim volume appeared by Hedy Hahnloser-Bühler, a good friend of the artist in his later years, which relied substantially on Meier-Graefe's study.<sup>7</sup> A general monograph, by the same author, published in 1936, added little in terms of critical analysis.<sup>8</sup>

In the past twenty years numerous small exhibitions of Vallotton's work, both painting and woodcuts, have been assembled in Europe and, more recently, in the U.S., but very little of any depth has been published. One notable exception is the few pages Fritz Hermann devoted to Vallotton in Die Revue Blanche und die Nabis of 1959.<sup>9</sup>

The 1970s have seen, however, a marked increase in interest in the artist. Two enormously useful publications have facilitated serious study of Vallotton. In 1972 a fine catalogue raisonné of the woodcuts, edited by Maxime Vallotton and Charles Goerg, was published,<sup>10</sup> and between 1973 and 1975 three volumes of documents concerning the artist appeared, full of information gathered together expressly for the purpose of aiding further studies of Vallotton.<sup>11</sup> One of the first fruits of this new availability of information recently emerged with the publication of

Vallotton: Graphics by Ashley St. James. This general introduction to the artist's woodcuts, published in 1978, should have been far more useful but, as the author fails to document her discussion, it will be of limited use to the serious student.<sup>12</sup>

The purpose of this paper is to examine Vallotton more closely than has yet been attempted. After briefly examining his position in the woodcut revival of the 1890s and considering the origins of his art, I will focus on a small number of woodcuts by the artist. Toward the end of the 1890s, the decade in which Vallotton created most of his woodcuts, he executed a series of ten prints, the Intimités, which, while they have never been studied in depth, have often been hailed as the culmination of his woodcut production.<sup>13</sup> As early as 1899, on seeing the series displayed in the offices of the Revue Blanche in Paris, Gabriel Mourey, The Studio's correspondant in Paris, wrote in the pages of that periodical,

Certain de ses pages resteront sans aucun doute comme les plus significatives de la personnalité artistique de M. Vallotton, de sa vision aigue et ironique du modernisme, de tout ce que fait, en un mot, de cet artiste, l'un des plus remarquable gravures sur bois de nos jours.<sup>14</sup>

One of the richest examples of Vallotton's graphic art, the Intimités provide a natural focus for an investigation of an artistic personality that clearly invites closer scrutiny. In addition, the set comprises something of an iconographic puzzle, one which is worth unravelling as it offers insights into both the artist and his milieu. As neither Vallotton nor his contemporaries ever committed to print more than brief, if enthusiastic, comments on the Intimités, the task requires an examination of the climate which spawned this exposé of relations between the sexes.

Vallotton, who showed himself in many of his woodcuts of the 1890s to be a sharp witted commentator on contemporary society, focused in the



Intimités on a social problem which deeply concerned the late nineteenth century, that of the relationship between men and women. Vallotton examined this relationship in the context of contemporary marriage in a manner which reflected a certain dour outlook on life and a rejection of popular sentimentality that marked both the artist himself and some circles in Paris at the end of the last century. Raymond Bouyer dubbed the series "le cauchemar d'un erudit."<sup>15</sup> In many ways Vallotton expressed, in these prints and others, the profound pessimism, not uncommon in intellectual circles of the time, which often found expression in bitter irony and dark humor. Remarking on this quality in Vallotton's woodcuts, André Thérive, in a preface to the artist's autobiographical novel, published in 1930, wrote:

...ses graveurs des années proches de 1900 peuvent passer pour une illustration..., celle de la chronique sombre de cette "fin-de-siècle" qui nous paraît à distance, boueuse, mal éclairée, vêtue de noir.<sup>16</sup>

## -Chapter I-

### Origins of Vallotton's Woodcuts

Vallotton's woodcut production of the 1890s was plentiful as well as rich in variety. His prints, issued individually or commissioned by a dealer or for some kind of publication, fall into four main categories in terms of subject matter. There are the portraits, such as A Th. Dostoiewski (VG 105, Fig. 1); landscapes, such as Le Mont-Rose (VG 105, Fig. 2); street scenes, such as La Manifestation (VG 110, Fig. 3); and interiors, such as the Intimités (VG 188-197, Figs. 32-41). Under "interiors" may also be included woodcuts which are essentially modern adaptations of traditional themes, such as Le Bain (VG 148, Fig. 4) and La Paresse (VG 169, Fig. 5). Vallotton's woodcuts deal almost exclusively with contemporary subjects<sup>17</sup> and reveal much about the artist's assumed role as social critic and even political commentator. While in his street scenes, in particular, Vallotton demonstrated a distinctly leftist stance, more generally he may be observed to be a sharp-witted critic of pretension and hypocrisy, with a strong sense of the ridiculous.

Once established, Vallotton's basic woodcut style underwent few changes. It is based on a generalization of form expressed in terms of broad areas of flat black and white, which function abstractly, in two dimensions, as well as serving a descriptive purpose. The organization of blacks and whites seldom follows any sort of lighting scheme in these woodcuts. Its rationale is to be found, rather, primarily in design considerations, but also in subject matter, as the contrast is used to underscore thematic oppositions. Though none of Vallotton's woodcuts are truly abstract, the concern for design, for two dimensional play between areas of black and

white, was clearly a primary concern of the artist. In fact, Meier-Graefe found Vallotton's compositions so successful in purely abstract terms that he claimed that they could be appreciated equally well if held upside down.<sup>18</sup>

The essence of Vallotton's woodcut art is a clean, unambiguous line, or contour. But for Vallotton this emphasis on line served more than a decorative function. Line was the essence of art;<sup>19</sup> it carried as much meaning, its power to evoke was every bit as strong as, for example, color and tonal gradation. Vallotton argued the point years later, through the medium of the young artist-protagonist of his semi-autobiographical novel, La Vie Meurtrière, in a fictional essay entitled "Sensualité exprimée par la Trait."

J'avais observé, au cours de maintes discussions, que les peintres et mêmes les sculpteurs semblaient dénier à la ligne toute valeur autre qu'évocatrice de silhouettes, architectural par conséquent. Selon eux, la couleur, en donnant aux objets ou êtres représentés leur qualité de substance et leur pulpe, avait seule pouvoir d'éveiller le désir des sens. Comme si le fléchissement d'une hanche ou d'un sein n'était pas aussi suggestif en son strict contour que les nuances, fussent-elles infinies, de la peau!<sup>20</sup>

A contemporary, writing on Vallotton's woodcuts, also seized on the strength of his line as the essential aspect of his art.

Toute la volonté et toute la puissance créatrice de Vallotton sont concentrées dans la ligne--ligne caractéristique, synthétique. L'effet de ce procédé, le plus simple de tous, est chez lui brutal and percutant, saisissant and essentiel. La ligne principale, née de la fusion de toutes les lignes secondaire, y a gagné en force d'expression selon une progression géométrique.<sup>21</sup>

With his remarkable sensitivity to the expressive potential of contour, Vallotton succeeded, in a print like La Manifestation (Fig. 3), in creating both a lively view of contemporary street life, full of variously characterized individuals, and a composition in which the interaction



between black and white areas is satisfying on an abstract level. In addition, each simple black shape, as it defines a figure in flight or one thrown off balance by the rushing crowd, also contributes to a carefully worked-out composition which evokes rushing and confusion as clearly in the distribution, in two dimensions, of black shapes over a white "ground," as in the characterizations of the fleeing demonstrators, and the rapidly receding perspective scheme.

Not one of Vallotton's many woodcuts departed from the strict adherence to black ink on white paper, though most of his contemporaries working with woodcut and in other print media were drawn to color. Vallotton did execute some color lithographs concurrent to his work with woodcuts, but in the latter technique, he restricted himself to black and white. The reason for this can be found, perhaps, in the artist's commitment to contour and in his interest, so clearly evidenced in the prints themselves, in the dialogue between the interaction of two-dimensional forms and the illusionistic space also suggested in his prints. By eliminating color as a variable, Vallotton focused on what he considered essential problems. Color would be an imposition, a complication which could detract from this dramatic dialogue.

This same emphasis on negative and positive also suggests why Vallotton found the woodcut technique so satisfying a means of expression. In the process of cutting the side grain of the woodblock, fine detail is very difficult to achieve, while long, even cuts are facilitated. As it mediated against detail, the woodcut technique itself may have helped Vallotton to find a personal style, one which he could later apply to his lithographs as well. Sensitive to the inherent character of the process, Vallotton avoided detail and fine black line, preferring to work with broad areas of black and white.

It may also be suggested that it was through the woodcut technique that Vallotton found his strength as an artist. From his drawings and lithographs it is apparent that he was often an uncertain draftsman, working over his lines many times in an effort to find the desired form. A number of preparatory drawings for woodcuts also exist, giving insight into Vallotton's working process. The artist seems to have begun often with a rough pencil sketch. This would then be clarified and elaborated on with pen and ink. Finally, Vallotton would fill in certain areas with a black wash, obscuring the identity of many of his preliminary lines while establishing the rhythms of areas of black and white. The actual cutting of the woodblock was not a spontaneous effort, but the final step in this deliberate process. The finished woodcut print would project, then, in its clean oppositions of black and white, and unhesitating contours, a boldness which denied its tentative origins and which could express Vallotton's commitment to line in the clearest terms possible.<sup>22</sup>

Vallotton's initial experiments with woodcut coincided with a general renewal of interest in the graphic arts. The period was one marked by experimentation by artists in new graphic techniques. Color lithography, in particular, came into its own in the 1890s. While the concept of the "original print" was established already by the start of the decade, there were still certain techniques generally considered more suitable for artistic expression than others. Print advocates expended considerable energy in an effort to broaden the field. Beginning in 1888, the precedent setting series of print albums, L'Estampe Originale, set itself the task of advancing less traditional graphic techniques.

C'a été l'honneur de L'Estampe Originale de protester, dès sa fondation, contre ce séparatisme, de reconnaître les droits égaux du cuivre, de la pierre, du bois à la traduction de la pensée, et d'établir, entre les graveurs de toutes pointes, le lien d'un organe commun.<sup>23</sup>



It was in this atmosphere of active interest in the artistic potential of less conventional graphic techniques that artists considered woodcut anew.

In briefly examining the work of those few contemporaries who also directed their energies to the woodcut medium in the late 1880s and early 1890s, the originality of Vallotton's approach should become clear.

The earliest interest in reviving the practice of printing from a woodblock occurred in England, where the Arts and Crafts movement focused attention on the value of fine craftsmanship over mechanical processes.<sup>24</sup> In their efforts to revive the finely crafted book, the private presses encouraged a return to wood engraved illustration. An essential difference between wood engraving and the woodcut, however, lies in the fact that wood engraving entails the laborious process of cutting the end grain of the block of wood and was traditionally the sphere of a professional craftsman, who would execute an artist's design, often in very fine detail. Deeply entrenched in their medieval models, the work of English book illustrators remained generally archaizing. The idea of the "original woodcut" or the artist's woodcut, found expression in England in the works of Lucien Pissarro, among others, who began to do woodcuts around 1889.<sup>25</sup> But the style of prints such as Two Girls with Flowers (Fig. 6), of 1890, is still closely related to that of contemporary book illustration.<sup>26</sup> With its rough-cut quality, this print reveals a kind of nostalgia for the technique of an earlier time and for the hand-worked product. Its clumsiness one suspects to be in part a reference to the general model and in part the artist's own weakness. The woodcut technique is here used, not for any particular quality unique to it, which might suit the formal requirements of the artist, but rather for its nostalgic reference to an earlier time.

In France, a renewal of interest in the late 1880s in traditional folk art woodcuts, of which the well-known Epinal prints are one variety, resulted in the adoption of the woodcut technique by the Pont Aven artist, Emile Bernard.<sup>27</sup> Bernard's early prints strongly reflect his interest in these woodcuts.<sup>28</sup> The Mort de Brandemart (Fig. 7) of 1892 is executed in a deliberately archaic style revealing close study of such prints. The adherence to the style, technique, and subject matter of the popular woodcuts, as seen in this print, shows an antiquarian's concern for the character of the model, which is absent in prints such as those of Lucien Pissarro.

But of more importance for the development of the modern woodcut in the late nineteenth century was the influence of the Japanese woodcut. While enthusiasm for Japanese arts and crafts was already widespread by the late 1880s,<sup>29</sup> a major exhibition of Japanese woodcuts, held at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in 1890, may well have inspired French artists to experiment with the technique.

Of the two artists responding to the Japanese woodcut to be considered here, Henri Rivière adhered most closely in both style and content to his models. Japanese woodcuts of landscapes, in particular, strongly influenced this artist. Prints such as Le Brechet (Port de St. Briac) (Fig. 8) of 1890, demonstrate how closely Rivière sought to imitate the originals, going so far as to include a monogram with the initials HR cleverly disguised as Japanese characters.

More important historically are the early woodcuts of Auguste Lepère, an artist with a background in traditional wood engraving who began producing his first woodcuts, some in color, around 1889, woodcut prints "qui marquent un véritable renouveau de la gravure sur bois."<sup>30</sup> A color woodcut such as On Va Gouter (Fig. 9), of 1890, shows Lepère absorbing and

reinterpreting some of the basic lessons of Japanese woodcuts with an unprecedented freedom. Flat areas of solid color and pattern predominate as in Japanese woodcuts. While black lines define and outline objects and often divide areas of color, there is no attempt at modelling with conventional hatching or close-set parallel lines, both standard devices of the wood engraver. But while Lepère did not aim, in this print at least, at imitating the look of the Japanese woodcut in subject or detail, his composition is itself lacking in interest. Historically Lepère's woodcuts mark an important stage in the utilization of the specific formal qualities of the technique, in the lack of detail and fine line and in the use of areas of flat color, but as works of art in their own right his prints are often somewhat bland.<sup>31</sup>

While Vallotton began producing woodcuts soon after these artists commenced their work in the medium, none of them seems to have been significant for his development in woodcut. Their importance lies, rather, in their contributions towards establishing woodcut as a viable technique for a contemporary artist. If any single artist influenced Vallotton's turn to woodcut, it would have been the little-known Charles Maurin, who was a close friend of the young Vallotton in the late 1880s.<sup>32</sup> Maurin, who worked as a teaching assistant at the Académie Julian, where Vallotton studied in the 1880s, was an independent-minded artist, skeptical of the contemporary art establishment.<sup>33</sup> Fascinated by different print techniques—his studio was said to resemble a laboratory more than an artist's studio<sup>34</sup>—Maurin was experimenting already in the 1880s with woodcut, probably before the artists discussed above, and in a manner remarkably free of the eclecticism that marked the woodcuts of the others. While precise dates are not available for Maurin's woodcuts, an interesting print in the collection of the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris has been tentatively dated toward



1885, several years before the other early figures in the revival produced their first prints. Comparison of this print, Portrait de Desboutins (Fig. 10), with Vallotton's first woodcut prints, including the Tête de Vieille Femme (VG 79, Fig. 11) of 1891, reveals telling similarities in style and subject matter, ranging from the character of the rough cutting of the wood, to the prominent initials of the artists, positioned inside the heavy borders. Though Vallotton's woodcuts developed in a different direction in his subsequent work, these portraits provide a key to his origins in the medium.

Given Vallotton's mature woodcut style, however, any relationship between his work and that of the other artists working with the technique in the first years of the 1890s is seen to be of only the vaguest sort. These early woodcuts were marked by an eclectic approach, or, in the case of Lepère, where the artist seemed to grasp something of the potential of this new "old" technique, by a lack of imagination which prevented his application of the technique from being fruitful.

The Japanese woodcuts which inspired Rivière and Lepère were certainly important for Vallotton. However, Vallotton's involvement with a group of progressive young artists who called themselves the Nabis, and his sympathy with many of their ideas, was even more significant in the formation of his woodcut style.

It was most likely through Maurin that Vallotton found his way to progressive art circles.<sup>35</sup> From his arrival in Paris at age seventeen in 1882, he had been quietly applying himself to painting in a conservative, precisely naturalistic mode that won him some success at the official Salon as early as 1885. While it has yet to be established when exactly Vallotton came into actual contact with the Nabis, an abrupt change in his

painting style, which occurred in 1891-2, at roughly the same time as his turn to the woodcut, reflected a new sensitivity on his part to less conventional trends in contemporary art.

Comparison of a conservative early painting such as La Cuisinière (Fig. 12) of 1892 with the bizarre Le Bain au Soir d'Eté of the same year (fig. 13), shows Vallotton experimenting along symbolist lines. While the latter painting is unique in Vallotton's oeuvre and does not directly reflect contemporary work of the young Nabis, it does mark a distinct turning away from the artist's earlier commitment to an academic naturalistic mode of painting and illustrates the extent to which the artist was reassessing the direction of his art.<sup>36</sup> This same openness on his part resulted in a more fruitful association with the Nabis, one which had considerable impact on his painting style and, especially, his graphic art.

The Nabis, taking their cue from Gauguin and Pont Aven, argued for an art that was not an imitation of nature, but that expressed the artist's idea in a symbolic formal language that respected the integrity of the flat surface of the work. Maurice Denis, the earliest spokesman for the group, wrote in 1890,

Se rappeler qu'un tableau--avant d'être un cheval de bataille, une femme nue, ou une quelconque anecdote--est essentiellement une surface plane recouverte de couleurs en un certain ordre assemblées.<sup>37</sup>

In keeping with this emphasis on the two-dimensional character of the artist's surface, the Nabis experiments with a new style in the early 1890s show a dramatic simplicity in the reduction of form to flat areas of color with generalized contours. Paintings such as Edouard Vuillard's portrait of Lugné-Poë (Fig. 14) of 1891 or his Self-Portrait (Fig. 15) of ca. 1892 are cases in point. Articulation of form is restricted primarily to a few heavy outlines, the heritage of Pont Aven cloisonnisme, and to contour,

the edge between adjacent areas of virtually unmodulated color. With internal modulation all but eliminated, the expressive function of contour is magnified.

While Vallotton's Le Bain au Soir d'Eté of 1892 reveals a radical change in the artist's thinking and shows him to be experimenting with symbolist ideas,<sup>38</sup> the general relationship between Vallotton's woodcuts and early Nabis works such as the Vuillards reproduced here is even clearer. Both show great concern for the two-dimensional, largely eschewing detail and effects of tonal gradation in favor of expressive line or contour. This specific comparison is all the more valid as Vuillard and Vallotton became very close friends in the early 1890s, and their earliest contact, though not documented, could well have been as early as 1891.<sup>39</sup>

That Vallotton should have been the first artist, as Hermann has posited, to recognize the formal potential of the woodcut technique and to make effective use of it,<sup>40</sup> is in part explained by his involvement with the Nabis. His sympathy with their philosophy of art made the example of the Japanese print, with its emphasis on the two-dimensional, more meaningful, and those two together enabled Vallotton to find a new approach to the woodcut that is of a different sort than the archaizing of Bernard or the "japanizing" of Rivière and much of Lepère.

Vallotton's relationship with certain of the Nabis is also evident in some of the subjects he chose to treat. Vuillard and Pierre Bonnard, the two Nabis with whom he was the closest, shared with Vallotton an interest in the contemporary life of the city and its inhabitants. All did street scenes and interiors that capture the sense of the living city. In some revealing cases these young artists produced works that are virtually identical in subject matter. One such instance is provided by Vuillard's Petites Filles (Fig. 16) of 1891 and Vallotton's woodcut of the same name (VG 129,

Fig. 17) of 1893. A comparison of the two reveals not only a shared interest in essentially the same subject, but also the closeness of their formal interests. But in the choice of many of his subjects and in the general tone of many of his woodcuts, Vallotton, unlike the Nabis, shows himself to be a critic, often harsh and ridiculing, of contemporary society.

Vallotton's commentary on contemporary issues ranged from criticism of the abuse of power by official authority, in prints such as La Manifestation (Fig. 3) and L'Anarchist (VG 104, Fig. 18), to ironical attacks on human behavior, such as Le Joyeux Quartier Latin (VG 165, Fig. 19) and Petits Anges (VG 139, Fig. 20). The former ridicules the mindlessness of "wild abandon." The dance may be spirited, but the participants are made to appear none too bright.<sup>41</sup> The latter, of clamoring children surrounding a policeman leading his prisoner away, shows Vallotton sarcastically ridiculing a sentimental view of children as little angels, by playing an ironical title and image off one another.

The attitude basic to Vallotton's criticism is one of profound skepticism, even cynicism. The underlying pessimism revealed in many of his graphic works shows the artist to be a man of his own time, marred as it was by a specifically fin-de-siècle malaise, a general dissatisfaction with life which, among some Parisian circles, came to be expressed through an ironic, slightly grim humor.<sup>42</sup> This general outlook, was shared by many of those involved with the Revue Blanche, a periodical begun in 1891, which published the work of adventurous young writers and with which several of the Nabis, as well as Toulouse-Lautrec, had close ties. Vallotton, as the Revue Blanche's principal artist,<sup>43</sup> was very much a part of this milieu,<sup>44</sup> and maintained many friendships among writers as well as artists. Vallotton's attacks on the world of appearances and popular sentimentality, aimed at exposing what he saw as the bitter reality underneath,<sup>45</sup> reflect



attitudes shared with this worldly and skeptical circle. Octave Mirbeau, in a comment on this lack of faith in appearances which reveals his own sympathy with the artist's state of mind, wrote of Vallotton in 1910,

...il cherche en toutes choses, de bonne foi, la vérité. Ce n'est pas de sa faute s'il ne la recontre point souvent, rayonnante, dans sa nudité légendaire, mais presque toujours habillée de mensonges.<sup>46</sup>

In his capacity as a graphic artist commenting on the contemporary scene, Vallotton was participating in the well-established tradition of cartoons and satirical drawings of the nineteenth century, rather than reflecting developments in painting.<sup>47</sup> By the end of the century, satirical drawings enjoyed widespread popularity which was accompanied, in the last two decades, by the appearance of a rash of short-lived periodicals, including specialized publications devoted to satirizing different aspects of contemporary life.<sup>48</sup> These, and most newspapers of the period, regularly published satirical cartoons which followed current events and treated issues in the public eye.<sup>49</sup> Vallotton's small-scale "exposés" of bourgeois society, his comments on hypocrisy, intolerance, power abused, and the simply absurd, are very much in this tradition.

This parallel is not coincidental. Vallotton, himself, did illustrations and cartoons in the 1890s and even after the turn of the century as a means of support and produced many drawings which fall within the mainstream of contemporary satirical drawings.<sup>50</sup> The three reproduced here (Figs. 21-23) exhibit basic qualities which typify such illustrative images. Most importantly they demonstrate the essential emphasis on narrative of such drawings, which is conveyed largely through clearly defined significant gestures and which is often dependent on a text or caption. These drawings, which postdate Vallotton's start in the woodcut medium, reflect generally

the style the artist developed in his woodcuts, in the quality of the generalization of form, in the use of flat areas of black and white, and in the elimination of most secondary lines. For the most part, however, they lack the carefully worked out compositions and the fine-tuned dialogue between areas of black and white which is so remarkable in the finest of Vallotton's woodcuts. Line, as opposed to contour, plays a far greater role than in the woodcuts, reflecting the difference in technique.

While Vallotton and his contemporaries saw his woodcuts and illustrative work as distinct from one another, his works in these two different spheres share more than some subjects and a general stylistic affinity. One finds that in some of Vallotton's woodcuts the narrative concerns that mark the illustrator seem to overwhelm the formal concerns which set many of the artist's woodcuts apart. In prints such as Les Petits Anges (Fig. 20), for example, the sense of the anecdote is foremost, with the result that much of the subtlety of composition, the fine-tuned interaction between an abstract, two-dimensional design, and illusionistic space, is absent. In comparison, in La Manifestation, L'Averse (VG 149, Fig. 24), or La Rixe (VG 101, Fig. 25), to name only three examples, though the subject is no less contemporary or immediate, a balance is maintained between content and form.

The relationship between Vallotton's woodcuts and such popular art may also be noted in the artist's use of titles in his prints, as they are related to the captions of cartoons or illustrations. The manner in which the title is integrated compositionally into the space of the print proper is unique in the context of the "original print" at this time. A kind of parallel might be suggested in Beardsley's Le Morte d'Arthur illustrations (Fig. 26) of 1892, which were executed in a pseudo-medieval woodcut style.<sup>51</sup>

But even there, while the titles are integrated into the composition as a whole, they remain relegated to an area of decorative border and are not included in the space proper of the image. In closer relationship to Vallotton's use of titles are the contemporary lithograph posters of artists such as the Nabi, Bonnard, and Toulouse-Lautrec.<sup>52</sup> These posters, which first appeared at the beginning of the 1890s, were encouraged, like Vallotton's woodcuts, by the Japanese woodcut and the trend toward the two-dimensional of the late nineteenth century. Given a concern for the two-dimensional which directly paralleled Vallotton's interests, these artists found a way, in the context of commercial art, to integrate words and image in a single composition.

In this vein it is interesting to note the close general relationship between Vallotton's graphic work and that of Toulouse-Lautrec. The two artists essentially came into their own through experiments in graphic media that were almost exactly contemporary. Toulouse-Lautrec's landmark Moulin Rouge (JA 1, Fig. 27), one of the first "modern" lithograph posters, dates from 1891, the year Vallotton executed his first woodcuts. These two men, who must have known each other, or at least been aware of one another through their common friend Maurin, by as early as 1890, are linked by their common artistic sources and by their interest in the potential of unconventional graphic techniques. Toulouse-Lautrec frequented some of the same artistic circles as Vallotton. He was acquainted with the Nabis artists and was part of the Revue Blanche group. The two shared many formal interests, including a fine sense of composition in two dimensions played against the creation of space. Flat areas of color, or its absence, and a similar generalization of form, expressed in even contours and a lack of internal detail, mark both their works.

In addition, Vallotton and Toulouse-Lautrec are linked as equally sharp-witted observers of the contemporary scene. Toulouse-Lautrec, who shared with Vallotton his involvement with illustration, had a similarly acerbic view of life, though he was perhaps more sympathetic to the human condition and less prone to ridicule than Vallotton. While much of Lautrec's art focused on the Parisian entertainment underworld, something with which Vallotton had little or no contact, in the choice of, and the approach to, certain subjects the two artists are closely related.<sup>53</sup> In fact, the uniting, in some of Toulouse-Lautrec's work, of certain formal interests with the subject matter of contemporary illustrators is related to Vallotton's woodcuts to a degree that it is not unreasonable to suggest Toulouse-Lautrec as the contemporary whose work most closely paralleled Vallotton's.<sup>54</sup>

The extent to which the two shared interests is particularly clear in a comparison of a Toulouse-Lautrec illustration with the woodcut Vallotton seems to have done after it. Vallotton's L'Execution of 1894 (VG 142, Fig. 28) clearly owes a great debt to Lautrec's illustration for Au Pied de L'Echafaud (JA 14, Fig. 29), which appeared on the cover of Le Matin in 1893. He has strengthened the emotional impact of the original by tightening the composition, using dramatic lighting effects, and by focusing even more intently on the reaction of the doomed man as he confronts the guillotine, here, as in Toulouse-Lautrec's version, just outside the composition, unseen by the viewer. Despite these differences, the two artists' conception of the subject is essentially the same. The thematic focus remains the same, while formally the two works exhibit the same interests in bold contrasts of areas of light and dark, in generalized form and the elimination of much detail, and in the pattern of a repeated motif, here the line of soldiers on horseback.



Félix Vallotton shared an interest in certain subjects with contemporary popular art and, on occasion, borrowed directly from such images, as in the case of Toulouse-Lautrec's Au Pied de L'Echafaud reworking a specific model with little alteration in sense or even style. In general, however, the artist's use of illustration as source material was of a different sort. More often Vallotton found in popular drawings raw material to be reinterpreted and integrated into a completely new work. The popular images of the illustrator could be attractive to an artist, as Anne Coffin Hanson has noted, "as raw material, quite regardless of their quality or even their expressive force if they offer(ed) formal or associative elements relevant to the artist's aim."<sup>55</sup>

Examination of the relationship between Vallotton's woodcut of 1896, La Paresse (Fig. 5), and a Steinlen illustration for a short story of the same year, La Femme au Chat (Fig. 30), reveals the function of the one as "raw material" for the other.<sup>56</sup> Steinlen's borderless drawing, which fades into the surrounding white of the page in a vignetting style common in contemporary illustration, shows a young woman, naked on her bedroom rug, playing with a kitten. Not a little coy, the drawing equates woman and kitten in their careless play as well as in their arching backs.

Vallotton's woodcut transforms an essentially anecdotal scene into an image dramatically evoking sensual laziness. The elements of the Steinlen drawing--the naked woman, the cat, and the bed--are all present, but the sense is utterly changed. From an elevated viewpoint, Vallotton's image focuses on the white bodies of cat and woman which stand out vividly against the over-all play of patterns created by pillows and spread. The woman reaches slowly and heavily towards the cat whose entire body stretches to meet her hand. In the two gestures is a powerful evocation of languor.

The cat and woman are equated, as in the Steinlen, but here in terms of voluptuous languor. Steinlen's frilly, flirtatious drawing is completely transformed in an image whose measured composition shows obvious delight in the decorative potential of pattern as well as in the evocative quality of bold contrasts of light and dark.

While Vallotton's early experiments in woodcut place him near the forefront of the late nineteenth century revival of the artist's woodcut, the real sources of his graphic art lie not in the investigations of his fellow pioneers in that medium, but in broader artistic trends. The Japanese woodblock print, along with formal directions only then being pursued in Paris by his young contemporaries, the Nabis, showed him the way, while in tone and in subject matter contemporary popular art, in particular the cartoons and illustrations given wide coverage in periodicals of all kinds of the day, was also important in forming his graphic art.

In the finer of Vallotton's woodcuts the artist succeeds in integrating his formal interests with narrative requirements of his self-assumed role as social critic and observer of the human comedy. In prints such as La Manifestation and L'Execution, composition and the specific organization of areas of black and white serve to reinforce the narrative in an essential way. In other of Vallotton's woodcuts, however, this interrelationship is lost and the resulting prints are decidedly less successful. A print such as Les Petits Anges, in which formal concerns seem abandoned to the simplest communication of narrative, is really little more than a cartoon itself. The particular configuration of black and white contributes little to the meaning of the print, which might as well be a line drawing, colored in. Neither is the print satisfying in the abstract. In a woodcut such as this one Vallotton's style becomes meaningless. The basic

difference between La Manifestation and Les Petits Anges serves to illustrate the nature of the unevenness of Vallotton's woodcut oeuvre, an unevenness which is very apparent even within a single set of ten prints executed over a relatively short span of time, the Intimités.

## -Chapter II-

### The Intimités and Fin-de-siècle Art and Attitudes

The Intimités represent in Félix Vallotton's work both a refining of ideas which had concerned the artist in his woodcuts throughout the 1890s, as well as a new step in the integration of the various aspects of his woodcut art into a single powerful statement. The set of ten black and white prints includes some of Vallotton's finest work in the medium, and in its entirety constitutes a valuable manifestation of his artistic identity. The dialogue between black and white which Vallotton developed so successfully in his earlier work finds its highest expression in certain of these prints, while the integration of abstract, descriptive, expressive, and symbolic elements in various Intimités demonstrates why this set of prints has been considered one of Vallotton's masterworks in the woodcut medium.

Published by the Revue Blanche in 1898, in an edition of thirty, five on tinted Japan paper and twenty five on cream wove,<sup>57</sup> the Intimités constitute an essay on the theme of couple relationships as revealed in the context of contemporary bourgeois marriage. In keeping with Vallotton's commitment to social criticism, his series of woodcut prints is harsh and anti-sentimental in tone. Through a series of ten tense psychological "dramas," Vallotton makes a devastating statement about the nature of man-woman relationships, characterizing intimacy in marriage as a farce and exposing marital relationships as, essentially, struggles for dominance.<sup>58</sup>

Unlike William Hogarth's Marriage à la Mode, Vallotton's Intimités do not follow any clear-cut narrative progression. Instead Vallotton

created ten variations on his theme, which, while they may, perhaps, be grouped in several broad categories, do not trace a specific tale. Neither are the ten variations intended to assume any particular order. While the order in which Vallotton executed the prints may be determined from his own records,<sup>59</sup> there is no indication that he held this sequence of any particular importance. As issued the ten prints were gathered in the single pocket of a folder and were not numbered.<sup>60</sup> Indeed, the prominent numbering of the prints in Vallotton and Goerg's catalogue is somewhat deceptive on this point.

The full meaning of the series is to be found, then, not in any regular progression from one print to the next, but in the sum of its parts, in the individual prints and the ways in which they interrelate. The meaning of an individual Intimités print is not always clear if considered in isolation from the set, but together the ten form an unmistakable statement on the character of domestic couple relationships.

The ten Intimités, Le Mensonge, Le Triomphe, La Belle Epingle, La Raison Probante, L'Argent, Le Grand Moyen, Cinq Heures, Apprêts de Visite, La Santé de L'Autre, and L'Irréparable (Figs. 32-41),<sup>61</sup> are closely related formally, in size and in general format, as well as in subject matter. Each of the Intimités, which measures approximately 7 x 9" or 177 x 225 mm, is laid out in areas of solid black and white and framed by a narrow strip of black. Each print depicts a fairly shallow interior space inhabited by two people, a man and woman, between whom some kind of drama is being enacted. In one of the lower corners of each image is located a rectangular title cartouche, with the title in simple block letters, while the other corner holds the small square with Vallotton's monogram.

Vallotton's use of black and white in these prints is similar to that seen in earlier works, in his concern for design coexisting with illusionistic space. Considered from a purely abstract point of view, each of the Intimités represents a different solution to the compositional problem of arranging areas of black and white within a rectangular framework. The blending of figures with their surroundings into an overall pattern of black and white reflects the decorative impulse of the Nabis that reached a highpoint in certain of the paintings of Vuillard. In Vuillard's People in Rooms (Fig. 42) of 1896, in particular, the patterns of furnishings and women's clothing combine to create a symphony of color and pattern in two dimensions, in which no single object or person depicted takes precedence over the whole. While the men and women in the Intimités do not relinquish their autonomy to this extent, formally the figures do tend to merge with the dark rooms they inhabit, in a manner reflective of the decorative interests of the Nabis. A strong parallel for the general format of the Intimités can be found in some of Vuillard's domestic interiors. A painting such as his Symphony in Red (Fig. 43) of 1893 shows a similarly shallow interior space, with the rear wall parallel to the picture plane, thus reducing the sense of space and contributing to the play of shapes in two dimensions.

There are, however, in the Intimités, additional levels of meaning in the play of black and white which transcend the predominant decorative-ness of earlier woodcuts such as La Paresse (Fig. 5) of 1896, a print considered above. The areas of black which predominate in the Intimités function abstractly and descriptively as they do in that print, but also symbolically. In prints such as Le Triomphe (Fig. 33) and L'Argent (Fig. 36) the use of great expanses of black that function symbolically take these



prints several steps beyond Vallotton's other woodcuts.

In L'Argent, for example, the conversation between the man and woman at the window is set off by the area of opaque black which consumes a good two-thirds of the print surface. True to Vallotton's interest in maintaining a balance between the illusion of three-dimensional space and the actuality of the two-dimensional surface of the paper, this expanse of black suggests a dark interior while also, in its unrelieved opacity, asserting the integrity of the paper's surface. As it does in most of the Intimités, the "title-cartouche" in the lower right corner serves to emphasize the two-dimensionality of the print, and in this case prevents the solidly inked area from creating a black hole in the paper. But, in addition to this central dialogue between two and three dimensions, this black field also functions symbolically. The black, as it merges the figure of the man with the darkness of the surrounding room, makes a strong statement, central to the meaning of the set, as it represents the void that is at the heart of the relationship between the two people portrayed and the nature of the intimacy the man is urging the woman to enter into. The dark interior takes on a correspondingly negative connotation throughout much of the series. Not only does the relative darkness of the interiors of the Intimités contribute to the ominous mood of the prints, the black, used so liberally, is also a metaphor for the nature of the intimacy we are invited to examine.

Contour had always been important to Vallotton, as a conveyor of meaning, quite apart from any particular color, as was discussed earlier. Besides the expressive potential of shape, the interaction of black and white in two dimensions, the overall decorative effect, was also important. In certain of the woodcuts, such as L'Execution (Fig. 28) and the

Instruments de Musique set (VG 171-176, Fig. 44), black assumed an additional role, one of creating an emotional atmosphere, even creating, in the case of the latter prints, dark, mood-filled interiors that anticipate the Intimités. But in the Intimités, in addition to these various different levels, Vallotton had come to recognize and exploit the potential of his blacks not only to convey atmosphere, but also to carry symbolic meaning. In prints such as L'Argent these many levels of meaning are integrated to a degree unprecedented in Vallotton's work.

The domestic dramas of the Intimités take shape in the relationships of ordinary people who inhabit comfortable middle-class interiors. From the cozy bedroom of La Belle Epingle (Fig. 34), to the book-filled study of La Raison Probante (Fig. 35), and on to the dining room of Le Grand Moyen (Fig. 37), a man and a woman go through what appear at first to be the straightforward motions of living together. However, on closer examination it becomes clear that all is not as it seems. Tense psychological drama lies at the heart of the Intimités; an unmistakable undercurrent runs through these scenes of generally quiet domestic life.

A contradiction between appearances and reality is central to the meaning of the set. Just as the individual Intimités are deceptively peaceful, so, Vallotton asserts, is the popular conception of domestic harmony a falsehood. Schopfer, a contemporary of Vallotton's, writing in 1900, two years after these prints were issued, focused on just this aspect of the artist's woodcuts when he stated that Vallotton's role was to

...hold us by the arm, as it were, and to show us actions and grimaces which have become by habit familiar and inoffensive--a new image wherein the ugliness of hidden motives appears to us suddenly and in its dry truth.

The Intimités he called the "...intimacies of humanity seen through the eyes of a pessimist, whom outward appearances cannot deceive."<sup>62</sup> Vallotton's



social conscience, which he shared with the illustrators and cartoonists of his day, led him to attempt to show his contemporaries to themselves by stripping off the veneer of the expected and the respectable. In the Intimités he attacked the conventional intimacy of middle-class Parisians, finding under the accepted forms of such relationships a hotbed of hypocrisy and deception masquerading as harmony.

In the Intimités Vallotton showed his contemporaries "the ugliness of hidden motives," avoiding escape valves such as exaggeration and humor and instead portraying what seem generally banal situations in middle-class domestic life. By adhering so closely to the "ordinary," he heightened the impact of the prints, creating a sense of immediacy that involved the viewer directly in his grim conception of intimacy. The apparent matter-of-factness of the scenes presented contributes significantly to the discomforting quality of the prints. The expected gone just slightly awry is far more disconcerting than that which is clearly fantastical.

Underlying the meaning of the Intimités is, of course, the age-old issue of the battle of the sexes. With these prints Vallotton examined the question in contemporary terms. The tenor of the Intimités is both anti-marriage and anti-woman. Marriage is portrayed as a battlefield for psychological warfare. The struggle for power is presented as essentially one-sided, with woman often portrayed as the cool, devious manipulator of her husband, bent on some psychological victory, while he is shown to be vulnerable and basically passive, by turns deceived and emotionally crushed.

In 1895 Vallotton executed a woodcut, Le Confiant (VG 161, Fig. 45), which anticipated the Intimités both formally and thematically. The print, focusing on a "trusting man" putting himself literally in the hands of a

woman, conveys the sense of the foolishness of the gesture and also of the danger of trusting this woman who wears a curious half-smile. Schopfer captured exactly the sense of the print when he wrote,

The Confidant details his life, his heart, and hides nothing; he tells all--with entire confidence. But he is the dupe of emotion, and the enemy, the eternal antagonist is there, who of his very avowals and confidences is creating weapons which some day will be turned against him.

This idea of the loving, unsuspecting man and the dangerous woman is carried over into the Intimités. In these later prints, however, unlike the Confiant, a context is established for this relationship, which begins to account for its nature.

The Intimités do present woman in a terrible light. It is she who may be observed lying (Le Mensonge), deceiving (La Raison Probante and Apprêts de Visite), manipulating (Le Grand Moyen), and ultimating triumphing over her husband (Le Triomphe and L'Irréparable). However, before dismissing Vallotton as a rabid misogynist, it should be remembered that most of these couples are related specifically in the context of marriage, as the domestic character of the interiors depicted demonstrates. In examining these prints an attempt will be made to show that, if the Intimités do demonstrate great distrust of women, they also strongly suggest that the intimacy of marriage is itself a falsehood and thus intimate that woman's behavior may be, at least in part, a function of her situation.

Also militating against the more simple-minded interpretation of the Intimités as a straightforward condemnation of women, is the lack of evidence elsewhere in Vallotton's work or writings of misogynistic sentiments. An isolated comment which Vallotton wrote in his journal in 1918 has been brought up in the context of the Intimités. Having overheard a conversation between his wife and some other women on the subject of an

upcoming marriage, he wrote,

Qu'est-ce que l'homme a fait de si grave qu'il  
doive subir cette terrifiante associée qu'est la  
femme? Il semble avec des pensée si violemment  
contradictoires et des élans si nettement con-  
traires qu'il ne doive y avoir des possibilités  
entre les deux sexes que comme vainqueur et comme  
vaincu.<sup>64</sup>

But Vallotton's question, while it reflects a contemporary sentiment that, indeed, finds expression in the Intimités, is certainly more rhetorical than real and the sentiment behind this statement cannot be said to describe Vallotton's conception of women or his dealings with the opposite sex.<sup>65</sup>

Why Vallotton chose the theme of the Intimités for a series of woodcuts and why he took the approach he did to the issue cannot be explained simply in terms of the artist's personal convictions. More important to his choice, no doubt, was the fact that the issue of relations between the sexes was receiving considerable attention by Vallotton's contemporaries. In focusing on the couple relationship, Vallotton showed himself to be, once again, a social critic sensitive to contemporary concerns, a role which aligned him with popular artists, as discussed earlier. And while the subject in general was particularly current, the conception of woman as threatening to man captured many imaginations at the close of the nineteenth century, taking form in such well-known types as the femme fatale and the belle dame sans merci.<sup>66</sup> In focusing on an issue of such contemporaneity, the artist also assured himself of an audience, and, more importantly, a market for his prints. It must be remembered that while Vallotton enjoyed working with the woodcut technique, his prints were an important source of income throughout the 1890s.

The question of woman's relation to man, and specifically the failure of that relationship, was an issue of vital interest at the end of the nineteenth century, as a crucial aspect of the broader issue of woman's place in society. The issue was widely examined in the various print media, in pamphlets, in widely circulated periodicals, and in longer studies, which touched on everything from legal reforms to psychological analysis. The contemporary novel and also, in particular, the Scandinavian dramas which became so popular in Paris in the 1890s, show a lively interest in the question.<sup>67</sup>

When a French interviewer asked the Norwegian playwright Henrik Ibsen, in an article published in 1897, whether he considered the "woman question" as the question of the future, Ibsen was quoted as replying:

Pourquoi de l'avenir? N'a-t-elle pas toujours  
été, n'est-elle pas maintenant encore la  
question par excellence?<sup>68</sup>

Ibsen's reply was to the point; the question is a timeless one and had certainly concerned people throughout the nineteenth century as well as at its close, but his interviewer's question is indicative of an attitude shared by many people at the time. Many saw the "woman problem," and specifically the failure of male-female relationships, marriage in particular, as a new problem, a modern problem.<sup>69</sup>

Laura Hansson, whose book examining the manner in which women were presented by a number of contemporary writers, We Women and Our Authors, was published in 1899,<sup>70</sup> expressed precisely this conviction that this failure was the burden of modern men and women. In her comments on August Strindberg's Getting Married (or Marriages), a collection of short stories published in 1884-1886 which concentrated on the theme of relationships between men and women, she wrote:



It is the real life that Strindberg has described in his Marriages, that real life which the many live, but of which only the few are conscious. It is the profound inadequacy of the closest relationships, which neither our grandparents nor our father and mothers experienced, but only the children of the '80s of the nineteenth century. Everything in our day--joy no less than suffering--leaves a bitter after taste on the tongue...<sup>71</sup>

Noting the somewhat grim tenor of her time, she specifically identified the inadequacy of intimate relationships as a phenomenon of the end of the century.

But if the pessimism of the age might account for a general lack of faith, the old question of man versus woman, was, indeed, given a new twist at the end of the century with the advent of new agitation for women's emancipation and for changes in institutionalized inequalities. There were those who saw a new breed of woman emerging from this movement, a specifically "modern" woman, one no longer content with her traditional role, endowed with a new sense of independence, and aggressively seeking power for herself. While some, such as Ibsen, could see in the relationship between the sexes a symbol for the failure of bourgeois society generally,<sup>72</sup> another train of thought, not uncommon, saw an enemy of man bent on undermining the structure of society--the "modern woman." She was grasping and power-hungry and it was she who turned the male-female relationship into a struggle for dominance.<sup>73</sup>

This new woman assumed many forms in the eyes of her male critics. Among well-known literary figures, Strindberg stands out as the one who condemned the "modern woman" in the most damning terms.<sup>74</sup> His play, Father, first performed in Paris in 1894, and for which Vallotton designed the program, was, according to a contemporary critic,

...destiné a défendre l'une des idées devenues les plus chères de l'auteur.... Il a eu un jour la vision d'un monstre dévorant, qui n'était autre



que la femme moderne, convaincue de l'égalité  
des sexes, et décidée à faire triompher ses  
droits...<sup>75</sup>

Marriage is the battlefield, with victory and defeat the only possible outcome, in this drama about a clever, manipulating woman who succeeds in driving her husband insane by devious means. As in most of Strindberg's later studies of couple relationships, man, the victim, is good, suffering, tenderhearted, and normal as opposed to the perversity of the "devouring monster," woman, in this case most literally a femme fatale.

Strindberg stressed the abnormality of this "modern woman" when he described her type in a preface to another of his plays, Miss Julie.

The half-woman is a type coming more and more into prominence, selling herself nowadays for power, decorations, distinctions, diplomas, as formerly, for money, and the type is tragical, offering us a spectacle of a desperate struggle against nature.<sup>76</sup>

In a slightly different vein, but showing many of the same attitudes is a novel by Guy de Maupassant, Notre Coeur, which first appeared in 1890 in the Revue des Deux Mondes.<sup>77</sup> The novel focuses on the "modern woman's" capacity for manipulation. In this case she is a sophisticated Parisienne whose life revolves around captivating men and holding them within her power. Her artificiality is stressed. As another character in the novel describes her, she is a

...femme moderne, c'est-à-dire irrésistible par  
l'artifice de séduction qui remplace chez elle  
l'ancien charme naturel.<sup>78</sup>

"Notre Coeur" is the vulnerable heart of men that proves unequal to the struggle with the artificial "modern woman." While this woman does not overtly challenge male prerogatives, she is every bit as power mad as Strindberg's women.

While Strindberg and de Maupassant sprang from very different backgrounds, the degree to which they shared certain attitudes, as demonstrated

by these works, is indicative of the pervasiveness of such ideas at the time. The attitudes made explicit in their writings had currency in Paris in the 1890s and find parallels in Vallotton's Intimités, in particular in the characterization of women as power-seeking individuals who will use unscrupulous means to "defeat" men. In general tone, however, the closest literary parallel to Vallotton's prints is to be found elsewhere, in the work of Jules Renard, a French writer living in Paris and associated with the Revue Blanche, with whom Vallotton was friends.

Both part of the circle around the Revue Blanche, Renard and Vallotton shared a general outlook on life. Hahnloser-Bühler, in her monograph on the artist, commented that Renard recognized in Vallotton a "frère de pensée et de sentiment..."<sup>79</sup> Both possessed a somewhat bitter sensibility, often expressed in chilly, ironical humor. The two men collaborated on several projects, one of which merits further examination in its relationship to Vallotton's Intimités.

In 1896 Renard wrote La Maîtresse,<sup>80</sup> a story about the matter-of-fact relationship between a young man and an older woman engaged in an affair without foundation in love or even passion. In the context of this loveless "love affair" Renard set out to expose popular romantic illusions about certain couple relationships, with the intention of revealing an underlying reality counter to that of popular stereotypes. The story, which progresses through a series of slightly ridiculous events, is advanced by straightforward dialogue which is totally unromantic. The critic Gaston Olmer, commenting on what another called "...un véritable petit chef-d'oeuvre d'ironie à froid...",<sup>81</sup> wrote of La Maîtresse,

Les voiles de bienséance dont nous cachons  
soigneusement nos âmes sont ici écartés et  
le couple apparaît dans tout son cynisme;  
nous sommes loin de la passion poétique et  
idéalisée...c'est la lutte brève...<sup>82</sup>



Much as Vallotton does, Renard, with his skepticism in the face of sentimental stereotypes, strips off a deceptively attractive surface, to find a basic struggle between man and woman underneath.

Formally there are also some interesting similarities between Renard's La Maîtresse and Vallotton's Intimités. Renard's story is advanced, almost exclusively, through the dialogue between his two characters, as in a play, but also includes sections of additional prose outside of the dialogue. The whole is divided into many sections, often quite short, each consisting of some situation in the developing relationship of the two characters. These sections are all preceded by brief titles, some describing a minor event to take place, such as "Echange de petits noms," others describing a state of mind, "Scruples," or "L'Alerte." This episodic format, which focuses uniquely on the interaction of the two main characters, bears a striking resemblance to that of the Intimités. In addition, the titles of the individual Intimités reveal a similar variety in their relationships to the "scenes" portrayed, ranging from a straightforward description of a specific activity (Apprêts de Visite) to labels of broader scope, defining the more universal meaning of a particular image (Le Triomphe or L'Irréparable).

Working with Jules Renard on La Maîtresse may well have provided a significant impetus for the Intimités, on which Vallotton began work only a year later, in 1897. The sense of cool irony which the two men shared is reflected in both their studies of couple relationships. It is also tempting to infer some connection in the formal similarities of the two works, despite the difference in medium.

Both of these artists, in turning to the subject they did, were participating in the late nineteenth century's reappraisal of couple relation-

ships. If Renard was fairly equitable in his "exposé," singling out neither man nor woman as the villain of the piece, Vallotton's approach, examining the couple relationship from a specifically male perspective and casting woman in the role of the dangerous opponent, was well preceded among contemporaries.

Renard's La Maîtresse proceeds in episodes linked through a single story line. The ten Intimités do not align themselves in this manner, as already pointed out, but function instead as variations on a theme, as is readily apparent in the use of different couples and different rooms in each of the prints. Each of the Intimités makes a different statement on the basic theme and together the ten paint a grim picture of a certain conception of married intimacy. However, while each of the prints makes a particular statement within the context of the whole, meaning is not conveyed in uniform fashion throughout the ten. Instead it is clear that Vallotton tackled the problem of conveying meaning from two different directions. While both approaches are united to some degree in most of the prints, they can be distinguished. Identifying them in turn provides a key to understanding the origins of the Intimités.

In certain of the ten prints, such as Le Grand Moyen (Fig. 37), Apprêts de Visite (Fig. 39), or La Santé de L'Autre (Fig. 40), Vallotton conveys an aspect of intimacy primarily through a kind of pictorial anecdote. A print such as Le Grand Moyen portrays a domestic drama unfolding in a specific time and place. The couple has obviously just risen abruptly from the dinner table. A disagreement can clearly be inferred. The man, dinner napkin still in hand, tentatively reaches towards the woman who stands, her back to him, in tears. The meaning of the print comes through in the chain of events that can be deduced from the particular moment portrayed. While the image takes form in the same bold areas of black and



white of the other prints, in this case one has little sense of meaning in the specific configuration of dark and light; it seems to be a stylish convention, a "manner." The overwhelming darkness of the print evokes a dim interior that is certainly not cheerful, but one has little sense of any further significance in the particular juxtapositions of black and white.

On the other hand, prints such as L'Irréparable (Fig. 41) show Vallotton giving form, not so much to an incident or event, as to a state of being, or condition. In this case the print makes a statement on the essential isolation of man and woman seemingly joined in domestic intimacy. This Vallotton renders by making use of a symbolic language, rather than by relying on narrative. Abstract formal elements are imbued with meaning, becoming what St. James has called "decorative symbol."<sup>83</sup> Unlike in Le Grand Moyen where Vallotton makes an effort to create the illusion of three-dimensional space in which his "characters" may interact, in L'Irréparable the space of the "room" is held to an absolute minimum, as is any kind of detail. The surface of the paper, the play of black and white in two dimensions, is foremost in the conception of this image.

The black that predominates in this print does more than create atmosphere; it seems to encapsulate, almost tangibly, man and woman both, holding them together. The curving contour created by the sofa back and the shoulders of the two serves to visually mark the link between them; indeed, in its shape, this contour seems to signal both the joining of the man and woman and a tension for separation, a straining in opposite directions. The potted plant, though ordinary enough in appearance, serves, as its leaves droop around the figure of the man, to echo his sense of defeat, both his physical and emotional collapse. The isolation of the

woman's head in the only area of unarticulated white in the print, which is thus a focal point, draws attention to the significance of that figure and especially her expression.

Furthermore, rather than serving as characters in the process of acting out some drama, the figures of man and woman in L'Irréparable function symbolically. In addition to the obvious quietude of the two, their severely frontal positions, presented, in a sense, to the viewer, endow the two with an almost iconic quality. From the title and the context of the print within the set, it is clear that L'Irréparable is the final realization of the complete disintegration of the relationship of these two people. In the symbolic use of black and white and in the static, iconic quality of the figures, the couple's estrangement and psychological isolation is taken beyond temporal experience to a broader, more universal level. These two can be understood as functioning in the context of ordinary time and experience. They are the brother and sister of the couple in Le Grand Moyen, a man and woman seated side by side on a sofa at some specific point in time; but this image makes a broader claim than the other, and succeeds in depicting the state of estrangement and isolation, more than it illustrates the dissolution of any particular relationship.

In the sense that the ten Intimités combine to make a statement on intimacy, and not to tell a specific story, it can be said that all of the prints function symbolically. Nonetheless, it is possible to distinguish between those prints which function primarily by outlining a particularly meaningful incident and others which describe a condition, using form and tone in ways that are less descriptive than symbolic.

In examining other nineteenth century works in the visual arts dealing with relations between the sexes, precedents for each of these approaches

to this specific subject matter can be identified. Recognizing these possible sources can contribute to a better understanding of Vallotton's art and help to place the Intimités in the context of contemporary work.

The anecdotal approach to the issue of troubled male-female relations, and specifically marital discord, is well preceded in the nineteenth century, in painting, the graphic arts, and illustration. Satirical treatment of the subject of bourgeois marriage and of types of women extends back to the early master of the modern satirical cartoon, Daumier. In the 1830s and 1840s, lithograph series such as Moeurs Conjugales (1839) and Les Bons Bourgeois (1846/7) examined with humor marriage and middle-class foibles and sentimentality generally.<sup>84</sup> An example from Moeurs Conjugales (Fig. 46) shows Daumier poking fun at the difference between romantic sentimentality and a somewhat less rosy reality. Daumier's gentle ridicule is conveyed through an anecdote communicated in both image and caption.

In painting the general subject matter was taken up at about the same time. Though genre painting devoted to intimate scenes of domestic life had existed almost from the start of the nineteenth century,<sup>85</sup> it was, as Hofmann has noted, only towards mid-century, with the naturalism movement and its concern for the reality of contemporary life, that subjects such as jealousy, estrangement, and marital conflict were considered worthy of pictorial representation.<sup>86</sup>

In the last quarter of the century in England, a number of paintings generally in this vein by William Quiller Orchardson demonstrate what William Gaunt has called "the last refinement of pictorial anecdote."<sup>87</sup> Not remarkable for any real psychological depth, paintings such as Le Mariage de Convenance (Fig. 47) of 1883 delight in showing marital discord



among the wealthy, set in grand and carefully described interiors. Somewhat voyeuristic in nature, paintings such as this one seem to allude to some unwritten story, much as an illustration does to an actual text, and invite the viewer to speculate on the drama surrounding the scene portrayed. Though there is neither caption nor text, one seems to be implied.

In the later nineteenth century, in France, one finds, in a similar story-telling vein, though more subtly handled, two paintings by Degas, which now go by the titles Bouderie (1873-5) and Interieur or Le Viol (1875) (Fig. 48), which also deal with tense relations between men and women. In the case of the latter painting, specific literary sources have been suggested, both in reference to works by Zola. Degas, however, referred to this painting as "mon tableau de genre," and never admitted to any specific literary influence.<sup>88</sup> The fact, however, that the paintings seem to ask for some literary source is indicative of the character they share with genre pieces such as the Orchardson. Paintings of this sort which convey a specific dramatic incident are part of the mainstream of nineteenth century genre painting.

Towards the end of the century, Edouard Vuillard executed a painting of this general type which is especially interesting to consider as it was certainly known to Vallotton. Vuillard, the Nabi whose early work was briefly discussed above, was good friends with Vallotton by this time. His painting, La Vie Conjugale (Fig. 49), of ca. 1894, is something of an anomaly in that artist's work, most of which reveals a deep contentment with a comfortable middle-class world. Instead of the cozy, peacefully inhabited rooms and gardens typical of Vuillard's intimiste paintings, La Vie Conjugale presents a situation heavy with psychological drama. The painting depicts a comfortable interior in which a man and woman stand and



sit silently across the room from one another. The character of brooding distance between husband and wife is unique in Vuillard's work.

That La Vie Conjugale, in particular, bears consideration in relation to the Intimités is suggested in various ways. Readily apparent is the general similarity between the two artists' works, in their conceptions of comfortably appointed domestic interiors in which some psychological drama takes place between a man and woman. Vuillard's characterization of la vie conjugale in terms of isolation and distance is, in addition, clearly of a kind with Vallotton's condemnation of married intimacy in the Intimités. Both constitute indictments of marriage.

Further evidence that Vallotton looked at Vuillard's painting is provided by a painting which he did in 1899, Interior, Red Armchair, and Figures (Fig. 50), now in the Kunsthaus in Zurich. The relationship between the two paintings is more direct than that of the Intimités to La Vie Conjugale. This painting depicts another domestic interior, but here the positions of, and the relationship between, the two figures closely follows Vuillard's work. In neither of these paintings is there any of the blame-laying that is so blatant in the Intimités. The man stands, leaning back against a wall, while the woman is seated in a defeated posture that also connotes melancholy. Distance, unhappiness, and, perhaps, resignation are the focus of this painting, as they are in Vuillard's.

And finally, the closeness of Vallotton's and Vuillard's friendship in the mid 1890s strongly supports the contention that Vallotton was familiar with the other's work. As the artist wrote years later, looking back on this time,

...Dire que nous fûmes si intimes, que les idées de l'un passaient dans l'autre<sup>89</sup> comme l'eau de la carafe dans la verre.

Given the fact that Vallotton was certainly familiar with Vuillard's painting, it is interesting to note that a specific literary source suggests itself for La Vie Conjugale, one with which Vallotton would also have been familiar. It seems likely that Vuillard's involvement with contemporary theater<sup>90</sup> was significant in the creation of this painting which is so uncharacteristic of the artist. It was about this time that Vuillard's involvement with the Théâtre de l'Oeuvre was at its greatest. The artist, who had personal ties to that organization through its director, Lugné-Poë,<sup>91</sup> created both sets and programs for many of its productions. In 1894 the theater produced a play by Maurice Beaubourg, La Vie Muette, for which Vuillard designed the program (Fig. 51).<sup>92</sup> The play is a melodrama about the estrangement of a married couple brought on by the husband's mistaken conviction that his wife had deceived him. The two go through their everyday motions coldly and miserably, each feeling wronged and isolated within their separate griefs. La Vie Conjugale may well have been inspired by this play, perhaps even by an actual performance.<sup>93</sup> In addition to the similarity of titles, further support for this hypothesis is provided by the scene portrayed on the program Vuillard designed for La Vie Muette, which centers on a glance, heavy with psychological content, that passes between a man and woman who stand apart.

In his drawing for the program of La Vie Muette, Vuillard gave visual form to the conflict investigated in the play. In La Vie Conjugale he carried this translation one step further, tackling a similar subject in the context of his painting.<sup>94</sup> While psychological drama was really outside his main field of interest, he saw fit, perhaps given the example of the play, to experiment in this work with what is really a variation on the intimiste interior.

While Vallotton, unlike Vuillard, seems to have had little contact with the theater world generally, he was involved with the Théâtre de l'Oeuvre specifically in 1894, the year La Vie Muette was produced. That year he designed the lithograph program for Strindberg's Father. It is likely that he came to the job through Vuillard, whose relationship to that organization certainly put him in a position to recommend his good friend. One of the few documented instances of Vallotton's involvement with contemporary theater, the program for the play, Father (VG 53, Fig. 52), is interesting in several ways. The program documents the artist's familiarity with Strindberg's play, as well as establishing a tie with the theater that produced La Vie Muette the same year. In addition, the vignette, which constitutes one part of the program and which depicts the members of the family in the play, stands as, perhaps, the earliest example in Vallotton's graphic work that shows the artist dealing with the general subject matter of the Intimités. It is revealing that the impetus for treating this subject was, again, literary, and that Vallotton's drawing is essentially an illustration.

Both Vuillard's and Vallotton's programs for Théâtre de l'Oeuvre plays illustrate direct links between literary treatment of questions posed by the relationship between the sexes and their elaboration in visual terms by the artist. Vuillard, in confronting the same issue in his painting, in dealing with such subject matter outside the context of illustration, may have provided Vallotton with a model, not only in terms of subject matter, but also in taking that step from the context of illustration to his painting.

Vuillard's painting presents itself as an obvious predecessor to the Intimités, especially given the fact that this sort of subject matter



received very little attention in the fine arts in the 1890s. There did, however, exist another important forum for treating in visual terms the issue of women and their relation to men. The artistic descendants of Daumier, the cartoonists and illustrators of the 1880s and 1890s, with their well-established tradition of social commentary and their sensitivity to current issues, examined the subject anew at the end of the nineteenth century, in a manner reflecting the spirit of the time. It has already been remarked that the end of the century was an especially lively time for satirical drawings and cartoons of all kinds. Worth noting, in addition, is the fact that the late nineteenth century, in particular, was a period rich in satire de mœurs,<sup>95</sup> whose revival, to quote Roberts-Jones, "...se caracterise par un intérêt croissant et une vision nouvelle de la femme,...."<sup>96</sup>

The work of illustrators and cartoonists followed the changing interests of society, and reflected, in this case, the increased concern for the position of women in society, specifically in relation to man. Raoul Deberdt commented on the role of these commercial artists in his study of French cartoons and satirical drawings published in 1898, when he wrote,

La caricature s'est chargée de traduire, d'incarner avec la plus perspicace sensibilité, les aspirations sourdes, les tendances psychologiques, de toute une génération.<sup>97</sup>

Given Vallotton's own roots in the illustrative tradition and the shared interest in a vital contemporary issue, it would be surprising if the Intimités were not indebted, at least in a general sense, to the work of contemporary illustrators and cartoonists.

Two of the most important commercial artists of the late nineteenth century, Jean-Louis Forain and Théophile-Alexandre Steinlen, produced many drawings, illustrations, and cartoons, which treat this issue. In the tradition of Daumier, Forain executed series of cartoons on the theme of



marital discord, one of which even bears the name Moeurs Conjugales.

Forain's small-scale domestic dramas, such as the two reproduced here (Figs. 53-54), show marriage demystified and couple relationships as sadly lacking.

The "scene" from his Moeurs Conjugales, which deals with the psychological distance between a husband and wife, reveals an ironical humor which stops short of being amusing. The second, in focusing on banal circumstances of domestic life, jars comforting illusions, and if it prompts a smile, it is a smile that quickly fades.

Forain's drawings reveal an attitude which Deberdt noted as a recent trend in the treatment of the subject. Deberdt observed the same overwhelming pessimism that Laura Hansson also commented on, a loss of faith in love and male-female relationships in general.<sup>98</sup> In keeping with this fin-de-siècle skepticism, Forain's ironic humor found a vulnerable target in the couple. Deberdt, describing Forain's drawings, wrote that they

...nous habituent à voir, dans la comédie amoureuse  
une abominable mystification ou un drame  
lugubre;...<sup>99</sup>

The same could be said of Jules Renard's La Maîtresse. It is clear that the attitudes so evident in the work of contemporary writers surfaced in a more popular form in the cartoonist's art.

While Forain's vision of human relationships is fairly consistently gentle and sympathetic, the work of Steinlen displays more of a range of points of view, and could be said to more nearly reflect the "...vision nouvelle de la femme..." that Roberts-Jones has noted. An examination of his illustrations for short stories and illustrations to accompany popular songs, all published in French periodicals in the 1890s, turns up what amounts to virtually a compendium of popular variations of the late nineteenth century on the general theme of the relations between men and women. From virgin to vampire, Steinlen depicts woman in all her fin-de-

siècle guises. The couple is presented, at one end of the spectrum, at its most romantic (Madrigal d'Avril, Fig. 55, 1895), at the other, as a pair locked in a deadly struggle (Remords (Fig. 56), 1895).<sup>100</sup>

Illustrations such as these by Forain and Steinlen, and the tradition they grew from, clearly offered Vallotton a general example in terms of subject matter and format. Many of the Intimités share the anecdotal mode of illustration as well as the succinctness of such drawings, the reduction of narrative elements to a clearly readable minimum, and also the interrelationship between title and image. In addition, Vallotton's skeptical exposé of a kind of couple relationship can be seen as sharing the socially critical bent of contemporary illustration, while the example of Forain offers a specific parallel to Vallotton's often ironical approach to his subjects.

In addition to these general parallels between late nineteenth century popular art and the Intimités, the drawings of his contemporaries, published regularly and in abundance in inexpensive periodicals could readily supply Vallotton with specific motifs. This use of popular art as a source of "raw material" was considered earlier in the comparison of La Paresse and the Steinlen illustration, La Femme au Chat. The sense of the original could be radically altered in the process of borrowing, but something of the illustrator's work could be useful to Vallotton. This kind of relationship between a specific illustration and an Intimités print is demonstrated in the case of Le Mensonge and its relationship to another Steinlen illustration and will be considered shortly.

All of these possible sources for the Intimités, from popular illustrations, to a painting in the genre tradition such as La Vie Conjugale, to the works in various literary media which also treated the issue of relations

between the sexes, convey their meaning essentially through different sorts of story-telling. While it is clear that this narrative approach lies at the heart of Vallotton's conception of many of the individual Intimités, prints such as L'Irréparable (Fig. 41) sprang from other roots. A comparably symbolic approach to subject was being pursued by French artists such as Gauguin and Maurice Denis at this time. These artists, however, tended to devote their work to spiritual subject matter. The only artist working in this vein to focus on the comparatively mundane issue of male-female relations was not French, but Norwegian, Edvard Munch. On examining his work in relation to the Intimités, the likelihood of a direct relationship between the two artists' works is strongly suggested.

Munch's Frieze of Life paintings of the 1890s and many graphic works produced after these paintings, as well as others in generally the same vein, are related to Vallotton's Intimités in both subject matter and style. The general relationship between the Intimités and much of Munch's work, which focused on psychological aspects of relationships between men and women, has been noted recently by St. James.<sup>101</sup> She has suggested, however, only the possibility that Vallotton's prints may have had some influence on Munch's work. Indeed, in those instances where the two artists' names have been linked in the past, it has almost always been in terms of the significance of Vallotton's woodcuts for the Norwegian artist. In particular, Vallotton's woodcuts are credited with having had some influence on Munch's lithography style.<sup>102</sup> It seems, on the other hand, most likely, in light of the character of certain of the Intimités of 1898, that this artistic exchange was two-sided and that Munch's work was of importance for Vallotton as well.

Vallotton would have found in Munch's work, not only subject matter related to the Intimités, but also a style which paralleled his own.<sup>103</sup>



Substantial impetus for Munch's mature painting style had come from his study of French art, with Gauguin playing an important role, as he had for the Nabis. To express his ideas visually Munch found a symbolic formal language based on expressive color, shape and a generalization of form, the elimination of much detail, and the abstraction of features, which placed his work within the same general framework as Vallotton's artistic circle.

Although on Vallotton's side there is no documentation of his knowledge of Munch to be found,<sup>104</sup> he had ample opportunity to familiarize himself with the Norwegian artist's work. Munch exhibited his work in Paris several times in the 1890s, including twice in the Indépendants shows, in 1896 and 1897.<sup>105</sup> The paintings he exhibited there were primarily from his Frieze of Life, and years later he wrote of the reception of the series in Paris:

...already in 1897 it was accorded a place of honor on the "main" wall in the last and best room of the Indépendant--of my pictures these were the ones best understood in France.<sup>106</sup>

In 1896 Munch held a one-man show at Bing's Art Nouveau gallery, an establishment Vallotton had ties with as well. Though there is no catalogue for this exhibition, Munch is believed to have shown some twenty-five paintings and some fifty graphic works.<sup>107</sup> During the run of the exhibition a review of sorts of some of Munch's paintings, written by his friend Strindberg, appeared in the Revue Blanche.<sup>108</sup> Indeed, the Revue Blanche had numerous ties with the foreign artist, as its director, Thadée Natanson, a good friend of Vallotton's, admired Munch. Natanson travelled to Oslo in 1895 to review a show of Munch's and the same year the journal published the Norwegian artist's lithograph, The Scream, in its December issue.<sup>109</sup> Munch was indeed a presence in the French progressive art world



in the 1890s and there can be no doubt that Vallotton was aware of his work.<sup>110</sup>

The potential of Munch's art as a source for Vallotton's Intimités is readily apparent. Munch's work of the 1890s focused on issues of love and death as part of the artist's complex philosophy of life. Munch sought, in the Frieze of Life paintings and related prints, an "iconography of modern psychic life,"<sup>111</sup> a formal vocabulary that could express the universal conflicts which were central to his conception of life. As Vallotton approached a related issue in his Intimités, Munch's "vocabulary," as it conveyed ideas symbolically, and, specifically, as it concerned psychological conflict between men and women, offered him a means of giving visual expression to his idea that was essentially different from that of the tradition of genre painting and illustration.

Munch's symbolic language is readily apparent in a painting such as The Dance of Life (Fig. 57) of 1900. Symbol operates on several different levels in a work such as this one. In the broadest sense, the artist uses the dance on a summer evening as a metaphor for life, and more specifically, for a certain series of universal phases in the relationship between man and woman. On another level, the symmetrical composition lends a static quality to the image and stresses the interrelationship of the three women and the man who occupy the foreground. They, in turn, are characterized through symbolic color and form. The relationship of the central couple is defined, in particular, by the manner in which the two nearly unarticulated areas of flat color which define their bodies are joined into a single clean-edged shape surrounded by an outline. The woman's red skirt, as it wraps around the legs of her partner, forms the base, in a sense, of this single shape, which incorporates both their figures. While Munch creates a definite progression into space in the painting, with

dancers on a lawn and the sea in the background, the meaning of the four principal figures is largely conveyed in two dimensions, using abstract formal means which communicate meaning independently of narrative.

Munch's graphic art was, perhaps, in an even better position to inspire Vallotton in new directions, given the fact that Munch's lithograph style shares many general formal qualities with Vallotton's woodcuts. His Anxiety (Fig. 58), for example, published in Vollard's Album des Peintres Graveurs in 1896, shows a combination of flat black and white and the use of smoothly rounded contours with only the sparest internal detail, that closely approaches Vallotton's woodcut style. I would suggest that Munch's use of formal symbol might be especially accessible to Vallotton, couched in a graphic style apparently so like his own.

While Vallotton's Intimités and Munch's work are related in various ways which will be considered further with the discussions of the individual prints, there are certain basic differences between the approaches of the two artists to similar subject matter that merit comment. Munch's approach is essentially more profound than Vallotton's, even in a work such as the Intimités, in which that artist attains, perhaps, the greatest psychological depth in his oeuvre. Munch's art was the product of, and central to, a complex personal philosophy and his paintings and graphic works have the quality of deeply felt as well as universal experience. Vallotton had neither Munch's unified conception of the way to visually realize his theme, nor can he be said to have had the other artist's deep intellectual and emotional commitment to the issue itself and its broader meaning.

More generally, it is fair to say that Vallotton was much more a critic of society and human behavior, looking from the outside in,<sup>112</sup> than

Munch. His small-scale dramas, even those that are not anecdotal, are tied to a specific class of people and, in the case of the Intimités, to "realistic" domestic settings. As Meier-Graefe early expressed this difference between the two artists,

Tandis que Munch intériorise toujours complètement, Vallotton s'arrête toujours d'une façon conséquente au côté extérieur des choses...

Vallotton remains the cool, ironical observer of human folly,

Vallotton reste à la surface, son humour, son ironie, lui sont en quelque sorte des cuirasses qui l'empêchent de s'occuper des choses avec plus de profondeur qu'il ne le voudrait...<sup>113</sup>

While Munch, in a sense, documents human experience, Vallotton criticizes contemporary bourgeois society specifically, without committing himself personally. The Intimités lack the emotional intensity of Munch's paintings; Vallotton observed his contemporaries closely, but did not open himself up to scrutiny as Munch did.

### -Chapter III-

#### Form and Meaning

Vallotton does not seem to have had a clear idea of the precise theme of the Intimités when he began working on the set.<sup>114</sup> This seems to have come, rather, in the actual process of working out the individual prints. Previous to this, Vallotton had probably planned the series only broadly, as variations on couple relationships. Evidence for this is provided by the existence of two prints, L'Eclat (Fig. 75) and L'Emotion (Fig. 76), which were the third and fourth woodcuts he created for the set, and which Vallotton later eliminated altogether from the series. The fact that both of these two prints are formally more successful than some of those included in the Intimités strongly supports the idea that Vallotton later focused his conception of the set, changing its meaning in some way, and that the establishment of thematic unity was very important to him, more so than the immediate attractiveness of any single print.

Clear evidence of the change in Vallotton's conception of the series is provided by a first version of La Belle Epingle (Fig. 59). This print was actually the first of the woodcuts Vallotton created for the Intimités, and comparison of this print with the second version, which eventually replaced it, offers specific insights into Vallotton's evolved idea of the set.

The earlier version shows a woman in a loose robe, her hair undone, examining, with great interest, a piece of jewelry worn by a man seated facing her on a sofa; he is fully dressed, his coat and hat behind him in readiness for departure. Were the imminent departure of the man and the relative state of undress of the woman insufficient for a positive iden-



tification of this scene, an alternative title which Vallotton considered for the print, La Sirène, leaves no doubt. The woman is in the business of pleasing men and her interest in this one is clearly shown to be mercenary. The woman's interest in the man's pin helps to characterize the relationship between the two. The man clearly understands this relationship, as evidenced by the gloved hand which restrains the woman's hand as it holds, or even begins to extract, the pin. His facial expression, as compared to hers which is all rapt attention, is impassive and perhaps somewhat removed. He has what he wants from her and he understands what she would like from him.

The subject is a conventional one. Prostitutes and various types of "kept" women, and their relations with men, were treated by numerous artists of the time. Cartoonists found here an area rich in possibilities, while Toulouse-Lautrec devoted a set of lithographs, Elles of 1896, to a sympathetic examination of the lives of prostitutes. Vallotton's first version of La Belle Epingle explored no new ground in terms of subject matter. The idea that a prostitute was an untrustworthy woman, out to get what she could from her client is straightforwardly presented.

The second La Belle Epingle (Fig. 34) shares the name and, ostensibly, the subject, of the earlier print, but the sense has been radically altered. The scene has been shifted to a domestic context; the comfortably appointed bedroom of a bourgeois household is the setting for this encounter between what are surely a young married couple. The woman is no longer the obviously dangerous "professional," but, instead, a childish, innocent-looking young wife. While her husband holds her tenderly, a moved expression on his face, she examines his pin with apparently childlike interest. She responds, not to him and his emotion, but to a fine piece of jewelry, probably a tie pin, which he wears. There is a certain coyness in her

childish demeanor and her ingenuousness seems a ruse of sorts. The implication is clear. In the earlier print, Vallotton made a rather terse comment on the nature of one kind of male-female intimacy. In the second print, by shifting the context, he makes a damning statement about the intimacy of marriage. In marriage, this print asserts, while mutual understanding and affection, or love, may seem to be the basis of intimacy, in fact, a kind of exchange lies at the heart of the relationship, an exchange which is fundamentally the same as that made explicit in the first version. The setting of the bedroom is essential to the meaning of the print. She marries for the material benefits, symbolized by the pin, secured through the association with the man, he for an emotional and a physical intimacy. That intimacy, Vallotton seems to say, can only be a farce, as false as that of the prostitute and her client.

With the change from one La Belle Epingle to the other, Vallotton established marital intimacy specifically as his focus, and this focus is maintained throughout the Intimités. In this print he establishes the falseness of this kind of intimacy by presenting the widely differing motivations of the couple. L'Argent examines essentially the same issue, but even more bluntly.

L'Argent (Fig. 36), one of the finest of the ten Intimités, thematically holds a central position in the series. While La Belle Epingle presents a picture of married intimacy which certainly illuminates its underlying character, that print approaches the issue somewhat obliquely. L'Argent, on the other hand, speaks directly to the critical question of the grounds for marital intimacy. In this very striking image Vallotton establishes the importance of buying and selling as the heart of the matter. The woman, dressed in fashionable evening clothes that bare

shoulders and plenty of breast, presents to view her voluptuous body. The man at her side gestures in a way that suggests an offer, a supposition supported by the way in which the woman gazes out the window, as if perhaps considering something he has said. The gesture of the man's left hand operates visually, not only as a gesture of offering, but also, as it seems about to grasp the woman, is doubly expressive, indicative of both his words and his intent.

The title, L'Argent, helps to focus the issue. Vallotton originally planned to call the print La Tentation, a name which implied, ambiguously, both the man's physical temptation and the woman's temptation to accept his offer. In changing the title the artist more clearly identified the issue and the role of money or material goods generally in the proposal which, given the context of the Intimités, it is reasonable to assume is of marriage. In L'Argent Vallotton declares the basis of officially sanctioned intimacy to be rotten; what develops, as presented in the other prints, is no more, he implies, than can be expected.

While La Belle Epingle and L'Argent are closely related in subject matter, they also share many formal qualities, including stylistic and compositional devices, which underscore the close iconographical relationship of the two prints. The motif of the standing couple is very similar in the two prints, including the relative positions of the figures to one another, the specific use of black and white, and the scale of the figures in relation to the interior and to the area of the print itself. The focal point of each print is provided by the white figure of the woman, which is appropriate as she is the pivotal point in meaning as well. The Intimités are seen very much through a man's eyes, the artist's sympathy resting clearly with the man. It is the woman who is the changing

factor in the equation. Whether inscrutable, as in L'Argent, or deceptive and hypocritical, as in La Belle Epingle, she is the protagonist. In these two prints her role is emphasized not only by the contrast between her white figure and the surrounding black, but also as her body is presented more or less frontally, while in each the man stands in profile to the right, both visually and psychologically serving as a sort of foil to her.

In each print the woman's body type contributes directly to the meaning of the print. The childish figure of the young wife in La Belle Epingle, along with her ingenuous facial expression, underscores the irony of the scene. While she appears to be, in every way, the sweet young bride, we know her to be otherwise, and much of the strength of the print lies in this gross contradiction. On the other hand, the voluptuous body of the woman of L'Argent powerfully conveys the pivotal aspect of her role in this encounter, the specific nature of her relation to the man and his money.

The various levels of meaning on which form may function in the Intimités were briefly discussed above, specifically in regard to the overwhelming area of black in L'Argent, but the relationship between form and content in these prints merits some elaboration. To briefly recount the points made earlier, in the context of L'Argent, the solid black which occupies most of the area of that print functions descriptively, as it suggests an unlit interior, abstractly, as part of a certain arrangement of areas of black and white which cover the two-dimensional surface of the print, and also symbolically, as the negative, void-suggesting qualities of black serve to characterize the nature of the encounter to be observed to the left.



That a certain ambiguity between the abstract and the descriptive was desirable to Vallotton is emphasized by two seemingly minor changes which were effected between the conception of L'Argent visible in a preparatory drawing (Fig. 60),<sup>115</sup> and its final realization in the finished woodcut (Fig. 36). There are several changes to be observed between this drawing and the final woodcut, including the change of the woman's hair color and the configuration of the window, but most significant are two small areas of white which he later eliminated. In the preparatory drawing Vallotton left a thin strip of white close to the right edge of the print which broke the otherwise unarticulated black and which could be read as light entering through a slightly open door. This simple break in the expanse of black had the effect of giving definition to the space of the room, in a sense throwing the scales in the balance between abstraction and spatial illusion in favor of the latter. By eliminating this strip of white in the final woodcut, Vallotton not only made the space of the room more ambiguous, but also made the actual identification of that black area as a room ambiguous. A constant shifting between the illusion of space and two dimensions is ensured by this seemingly minor change, as it is also by the elimination of the extension of the hem of the woman's gown to the right of the figure of the man.

With this second change Vallotton eliminated all sense of separation between the figure of the man and the darkness behind him. He becomes one with this expanse of black, recognizable only in a hand, a face, and the elegant sweep of his profile in evening clothes. His insubstantiality contrasts strikingly with the corporeality of the woman. The black expanse becomes identified with the man, while white seems the medium of the woman, her white skin and white gown linking her to the light beyond

the window through which she gazes.

The choice of white for the figure of the woman may well be ironical. In the context of the print, its connotation of purity and innocence would seem to be one more instance of Vallotton insisting on the dichotomy between popular romantic ideals and his own particular brand of reality. But if her whiteness does not reflect any real purity, it does link the woman with the brightness beyond the window, with the freedom and open air of the world at large, in contrast to the oppressive black of the interior. This contrast helps to illuminate, so to speak, the meaning of the black from which the figure of the man emerges. As an unlit interior space, this area of black characterizes the intimacy into which the woman is urged as the very opposite of light and air. The man's offer to the woman seems an invitation to come away from the light and to join him in the darkness. Given the issue, emphasized by the title, of buying and selling as the basis of this proposed intimacy, this black takes on an even grimmer connotation. René Berger, commenting on this print in 1954, wrote:

La vénalité, a-t-elle jamais été mieux exprimée  
que dans cette gravure, si inoffensive d'apparence,  
L'Argent? L'argent, ce vide noir immense, d'où  
émergent la tête et la main anonymes de celui qui  
"achète,"...<sup>116</sup>

If Berger found in this area of black a symbol for money itself, the context of the Intimités suggests a broader interpretation. This black is the intimacy which is respectable but illusory, corrupt in its origins and essentially empty.<sup>117</sup>

La Belle Epingle (Fig. 34) takes the viewer inside the darkness of this intimacy to examine, through Vallotton's cynical eyes, the quality of this "purchased" intimacy. The predominant black of this print echoes

that of L'Argent, and if the formal scheme of black and white serves more of a precisely descriptive function than in the more abstract L'Argent, meaning is still conveyed through the organization, in two dimensions, of areas of black and white, in conjunction with that communicated by gesture, setting, and title. In particular, the manner in which the black of the man's form merges with that of the room, and specifically with the bed behind him, conveys an idea which is analogous to that of L'Argent. The contrast between the brightness outside and the somewhat cramped darkness of the interior is also continued in La Belle Epingle. Again there is irony in the choice of white for the figure of the woman, while that white also serves to set her apart both visually and psychologically from her surroundings.

If Vallotton's manipulation of areas of black and white in L'Argent seemed to follow, at least generally, a scheme of natural light, in the contrast between the light from the window and the darkness of the unlit interior, La Belle Epingle is far more representative of the Intimités, in the manner in which lights and darks are assigned without reference to any real lighting scheme. While a window to the left indicates the existence of bright daylight outside, the use of black and white elsewhere in the picture is clearly independent of this consideration. Questions of design and formal symbolism were obviously more important to Vallotton than naturalistic effects of light and dark. It is particularly interesting, however, to note that Vallotton actually brought together in La Belle Epingle this rather abstract system of assigning blacks and whites to objects, with a remarkably naturalistic effect of light and dark. He creates a wonderful effect of brilliant light beyond the darkness of the bedroom as light seems to dissolve the filmy fabric of the

undercurtain of the window and the vase of flowers is silhouetted against that light.

Together La Belle Epingle and L'Argent establish the basic premise on which the Intimités elaborate. In these prints, Vallotton establishes the exchange of "goods and services" as the basis of marriage. Marital intimacy, he implies, is therefore doomed from the start. While the Intimités clearly reflect a male point of view, these two prints demonstrate that malice towards women was not Vallotton's primary motivation. He presents, in these prints, a dark view of the basis of conventional marriage. If La Belle Epingle might, perhaps, be interpreted as sympathetically portraying the loving husband who is deceived by his mercenary young wife, in L'Argent one is presented unambiguously with an exchange of "goods" which cannot be called innocent on either side. But Vallotton does not carry this sense of shared responsibility through many of the other prints; once having identified the core of the problem, he seems to shift his position and to become a sort of apologist for the wronged male, finding explanation for the failure of marital intimacy in the inconstancy and deception of women. The men of the Intimités seldom take any initiative in their relations with the women. Instead they react. In this way all responsibility is delegated to the other, to the woman, a position which, curiously, seems to ignore the aspect of mutual exchange established in L'Argent and La Belle Epingle.

The majority of the remaining eight Intimités focus on a kind of psychological warfare between man and woman, in which the woman is generally condemned as manipulative and hypocritical. Le Mensonge and Le Triomphe (Figs. 32-33), the first two prints Vallotton executed for the set after



the discarded first version of La Belle Epingle, are among the finest of the Intimités. In each of these prints Vallotton brought together his many strengths as a woodcut artist. The two are also interesting in their ties to specific works by other artists. Le Mensonge, the subject of which is the lie which is basic to Vallotton's concept of married intimacy, very possibly found a general model in an illustration by Steinlen, though both the style and the specific meaning of the woodcut are quite different from the other's lithograph drawing. On the other hand, Le Triomphe, Vallotton's visual realization of the power struggle he and many of his contemporaries found at the heart of relations between the sexes, may well find a source in Munch's work.

The subject of Le Mensonge is a lie that is told by a woman to a man, the lie that is basic to their relationship. As in the case of many of the woodcuts of the Intimités, outwardly as least, harmony reigns between the couple portrayed. The two sit closely together in a dimly lit living room. Cups and bottles on the table signal the domestic character of the interior, as they did in Vuillard's La Vie Conjugale (Fig. 49). But what at first glimpse might appear to be a tender scene between a loving couple is soon shown to be otherwise. The deception being practiced is signaled in the title, but is also made clear in visual terms. Most revealing, perhaps, are the exaggerated curves of the woman's body as she leans against the man. In her apparent bonelessness one perceives a passiveness that is insincere. There is something insinuating in her snakelike posture that negates its apparently submissive character. Not only do her words ring false, she also lies with her body. As in La Belle Epingle, a submissive or affectionate posture is exposed as essentially false. Her companion, listening to her with closed eyes, is, in fact,

the passive figure of the two. He is thoroughly deceived; nothing in his demeanor expresses any doubt concerning what he is told or the way in which he is approached.

Vallotton treats a classic theme in Le Mensonge. The tradition of the man manipulated and often made foolish by an apparently amorous woman is centuries old. The harshness of Vallotton's interpretation is brought out by a comparison of Le Mensonge with an image by a contemporary artist which treats a similar subject. Toulouse-Lautrec's Reine de Joie (JA 5, Fig. 61) of 1892 provides an especially interesting contrast to Vallotton's woodcut given that the two share many formal qualities as well. Toulouse-Lautrec's advertisement shows a young woman taking advantage in the classic manner of a rather befuddled looking, certainly wealthy, old man. If the basic theme is not so very different from Vallotton's, the humorous tone is completely contrary to his conception of the subject in Le Mensonge. The Intimités print conveys an ominousness that is quite unlike any of Toulouse-Lautrec's work. The woman has a predatory quality which is reminiscent of Munch's vampire images and, with them, participates in the late nineteenth century's fascination with the femme fatale, the dangerous, life-threatening woman.

Le Mensonge finds a more specific parallel in the view of marriage Strindberg presents in Father.<sup>118</sup> The idea that marriage is a battle of unevenly armed opponents, in which women cannot be trusted to play by any rules, is basic to the story. "Yes," says the husband in the play, as he begins to crumble under the psychological onslaught of his wife, "you have a fiendish power of getting your own way; but so has anyone who does not scruple about the way it is accomplished."<sup>119</sup> The implication is that, while women pretend to be submissive and loving, they are, in actuality,

plotting the "defeat" of men. They cannot be trusted. Their embraces are lies.

Steinlen's illustration for Le Triomphe du Coeur (Fig. 62), a story which appeared in Gil Blas in 1895, is obviously related to Vallotton's Le Mensonge in composition and, very generally, in subject. Comparison of the two images is interesting not only as it supports the contention that Vallotton found source material for the Intimités in popular or commercial art, but also as the contrast between the two emphasizes the differences in focus in the two artists' approaches to a very similar composition. This contrast has already received some attention above in the comparison made between Vallotton's La Paresse and Steinlen's drawing illustrating La Femme au Chat. The relationship between Le Mensonge and the Le Triomphe du Coeur drawing is of a similar kind.

The two interior spaces and their inhabitants, animate and inanimate, are strikingly similar, while the respective emphases of the two artists are quite different. The compositional elements of the two images are almost identical, from the striped wall in the rear, parallel to the picture plane, to the chairs set on the same diagonal axes, to the seated couple in the foreground. The heart of the difference between the two lies in Vallotton's concern for composition in two dimensions, for the play between design in black and white and the illusion of space. The Steinlen does not exhibit this dual interest. Objects and people are sketched in the round, filling and thus defining the space from the picture plane to the rear wall.

Vallotton, on the other hand, relies on contour to define objects, allowing very little internal modelling. The emphasis on shape is important to the play between the two and three-dimensional. The stuffed chair and

sofa are identifiable as such, but their forms merge with one another and with the surrounding areas of black to become an abstract expanse of black, articulated only here and there by an internal white line. The white of the tablecloth functions in a like manner. While Steinlen positioned the woman in his drawing so that she leans back into the space of the picture, Vallotton placed his embracing couple parallel to the picture plane, where the component shapes of the two bodies are easily integrated into the overall arrangement of black and white over the surface of the paper.

An especially telling example of this difference in intent is apparent in the ways the two artists use the motif of stripes in their pictures. Steinlen deliberately emphasizes the role of these parallel lines as wallpaper on a rear wall through the addition of grey shadows which are seen to fall across its surface. Vallotton clearly wanted to avoid such unambiguous illusionism. In a preparatory drawing for Le Mensonge (Fig. 63) he had experimented with using a corner, a juncture of two blank walls, in the background. This space-creating device he abandoned for the completely flat wall of stripes of the finished woodcut, and the effect of this scheme is clear. The striped area fluctuates between serving simply as a pattern of bold black lines across the surface of the paper and serving as the papered rear wall of this living room. The picture leaning out from the wall in the upper right corner is important in maintaining this dialogue between design and illusion; without its space defining presence, the rows of stripes might entirely cease to act as "wall."<sup>120</sup>

Though the two images are apparently related in subject matter, their meanings differ greatly. It is clear that what Vallotton found in Steinlen's drawing was a basic motif that could serve his own purposes



and which he then altered to that end. Besides the obvious differences between Steinlen's straightforwardly romantic encounter and the darker, more ominous implications inherent in the embrace of Le Mensonge, there is also an important difference in the two artists' approaches to narrative which further illuminates Vallotton's conception of the Intimités. Steinlen sketches an event, a moment in a story in which a young man drops to one knee and kisses the hand of the woman before him. There is specificity in the shadows on the wall, in the detail with which the wicker furniture is drawn, and even in the clothing worn by the couple. Vallotton, while he provides sufficient information to generally identify the interior as domestic and middle-class, avoids the kind of detail that would create a sense of the moment. The scene takes on, instead, a degree of symbolic significance, an idea reinforced by the title of the print. This is not just a lie told by one person to another, but the lie, which, in the context of the Intimités, becomes a metaphor for this kind of relationship in general.

In Le Triomphe (Fig. 33), unlike the last three Intimités discussed, the couple is physically separated, each on opposite sides of the print. This physical separation is tied directly to the meaning of the print. In Le Triomphe the reality of the relationship surfaces; the psychological power struggle reveals itself. There is no longer even the illusion of closeness that the embraces of Le Mensonge and La Belle Epingle suggest. This print marks the conclusion of one round in a larger battle. The victory belongs unambiguously to the woman. Her straightbacked and rigid frontal pose expresses an obdurate stance while her husband slumps onto a table in defeat, once again passive, his face buried in his handkerchief. While the woman sits with her hands loosely and apparently passively crossed

in her lap, one senses in her stillness, the "impenetrable calm" of the dangerous type of woman that Hofmann notes in his discussion of femme fatale imagery.<sup>121</sup>

In addition to the postures of the man and woman, the different qualities of the two sides of the print which they occupy also contribute to one's sense of their conditions or states of mind. The left side of the print is stark and simple, with broad areas of black and white and little detail. The woman's head emerges from a great mass of black and is set off by the area of blank white which also serves to indicate a rear wall. In isolating her head in this way, Vallotton focuses attention on her grim, tight-lipped expression, which shows her to be unmoved as she considers the collapsed figure of her husband. In the first state of Le Triomphe (Fig. 64), Vallotton left two additional small rectangular white areas on either side of the woman which served to define the physical limits of her body. By eliminating these, he enlivened the characterization of the woman, identifying her with the expanse of black, which on another level we know to include a pillow bedecked sofa. In the broad black silhouette of this area, which links shoulders, head, and pillows into one form, Vallotton suggests, with great wit, not only a woman seated against a jumble of pillows, but also, the form of a harpy, the classic symbol of the vindictiveness and destructiveness of women. Without breaking with the domestic, everyday context of the Intimités, he alludes metaphorically to the nature of this woman. Her hard-edged, intractable character also finds parallels in the spiky points of the pillows and the unyielding geometric shapes of the pictures on the wall.<sup>122</sup>

In contrast to the starkness of the left side of Le Triomphe, the right appears cluttered. In his state of collapse, the figure of the

huddled man is almost lost amidst the busyness of domestic furnishings. This effect reinforces the sense of his being overwhelmed. His limpness is echoed in the shapes of the furniture. The darkness threatens to engulf him.

While the separateness of the man and woman in Le Triomphe is clearly expressed, Vallotton links the two through the almost solid area of black which covers the lower half of the print. Despite their isolation, each from the other, an isolation which is both physical and emotional, the man and woman remain joined by the boundaries of the print, by the narrow confines of the room they share, and by the predominant black of the image. As husband and wife they are tied to one another, even as the illusion of perfect intimacy is exposed as false. This idea of the couple as separate but joined is taken to its logical conclusion in another of the Intimités, L'Irréparable, to be discussed shortly.

The power struggle marked by Le Triomphe was considered by Strindberg to be basic to the relationship between the sexes, a point of view he advanced in Father. The playwright succinctly spelled out the consequences of this state of affairs in an exchange of dialogue between the husband and wife whose relationship the play dissects.

Wife: Power, yes! What has this whole life and death struggle been for but power?  
 Husband: This is like race hatred. If it is true that we are descended from monkeys, at least it must be from two separate species. We are certainly not like one another, are we? ...I feel that one of us must go under in this struggle.  
 Wife: Which?  
 Husband: The weaker, of course.<sup>123</sup>

And in Vallotton's print, as in Strindberg's play, the man proves to be the weaker, faced as he is with such a formidable opponent.

Vallotton's program for the 1894 production of Father, briefly examined earlier, which includes, in the form of a small vignette, a drawing depicting a man in an attitude of despair with an oddly smiling woman behind him, bears a close relationship to the imagery of Le Triomphe. The woodcut can almost be seen as fleshing out the idea of the earlier drawing, placing the couple in a domestic environment, while eliminating the implication of insanity which was specific to Strindberg's play.

The curious half-smile of the woman of the program vignette and the determined look of the woman in Le Triomphe both seem to express some kind of grim satisfaction. The idea that women enjoyed defeating men was certainly current at the end of the nineteenth century--it was seen as part of their "modern" perverseness. De Maupassant's heart-breaker in Notre Coeur delighted in her successes in overpowering, and then ruling, the men around her.

Cela l'amusait tant de les sentir envahis peu à peu,  
conquis, dominés par sa puissance invincible de femme,  
.... Cela avait poussé en elle tout doucement, comme  
un instinct caché qui se développe, l'instinct de la  
guerre et de la conquête.<sup>124</sup>

If the domestic context of Vallotton's prints differs from that of De Maupassant, the sense of satisfaction with power and victory is related.

Munch adopted a similarly damning approach to women in some of his early works. Besides the motif of the vampire, which he reworked many times, and harpy imagery, one also finds subjects such as Girl and Heart (Fig. 65) and Under the Yoke (Fig. 66) which stress the power women have over men and the pleasure they take in exercising it. But Munch also painted a number of pictures which demonstrate more sensitive analysis of relations between the sexes, and one of these may well have been a source for Le Triomphe. Ashes (Fig. 67), painted in 1894 and quite possibly



shown in Paris,<sup>125</sup> differs somewhat from Vallotton's woodcut. Both deal with a kind of victory of woman over man, but Munch's painting is concerned with an anxiety which is sexual in origin. In imagery and composition, however, there are interesting similarities between the two. Besides the similarity in the general spatial relationship between the figures and their relationship to the space of the picture, the woman in each is presented frontally and erect, while the man is a hunched figure seen in profile, holding his head in his hand in a traditional attitude of melancholy and despair. The two works are related as symbolic evocations of conflict and of some kind of psychological victory of woman over man. There do remain, though, basic differences in the scope and depth of the two works, as discussed earlier.

In addition to this painting, Munch also executed a lithograph in 1896 that is a fairly close reworking of Ashes (Fig. 68), and that Vallotton might have seen, if not the painting itself.<sup>126</sup> This print constitutes an especially interesting potential link between the two artists in that it may also reflect Vallotton's influence on Munch, both in the general formal sense touched on earlier, and, specifically, in the inclusion of the title within the space proper of the print.<sup>127</sup>

That Munch, in turn, saw Vallotton's Le Triomphe specifically, and may have recognized its relationship with his painting of 1894, is suggested by a print which the Norwegian artist executed in 1899, the year following the issuing of the Intimités. This woodcut, Man and Woman (Fig. 69), is even more closely related to Vallotton's print than the earlier painting, in terms of composition. The positions of the two figures are very similar to those of Le Triomphe, with the woman now seated on the left, and the man on the right, head in hand, parallel to

the picture plane and turned toward, instead of away from, the woman.

In Le Mensonge and Le Triomphe, as well as in L'Argent and La Belle Epingle, Vallotton brought together, with great success, his many strengths as a graphic artist. Various levels of meaning are integrated to a remarkable degree in these prints, in form that functions descriptively and in abstract terms, and that serves both decorative and symbolic ends. There is a jarring power in these images of psychological drama between men and women that is cold and quite devastating in its impact.

This was not, however, a level of expression which Vallotton sustained throughout the Intimités. Why he did not is a question which has no ready answer. It is true that Vallotton's work as a whole is uneven. Perhaps his interest flagged over the course of executing the ten woodcuts. Or perhaps the nature of the points Vallotton wanted to make in other of the woodcuts seemed to call for a different approach, one placing a heavier emphasis on narrative. Whatever the reason, in prints such as La Raison Probante (Fig. 35), Le Grand Moyen (Fig. 37), and Apprêts de Visite (Fig. 39), Vallotton seems to have fallen back on an anecdotal approach, akin to that of illustration and contemporary cartoons, something which is also reflected in the difference in the titles of these prints from those discussed above. Instead of naming qualities that characterize aspects of the intimate relationship Vallotton purports to describe, as do Le Mensonge or L'Argent, these titles label incidents or events.

In these three prints, Vallotton expands on the idea of the manipulation practiced by women upon men. Two, La Raison Probante and Apprêts de Visite, have as their subject the unfaithfulness of woman, while the third, Le Grand Moyen, illustrates the ends to which a woman will go to get the better of a man. The premise that she may resort to tears as a

way of manipulating her husband is really very trite as subject matter. In fact, all three prints are of a grade of domestic melodrama which is curiously banal in comparison with the previous four prints discussed here.

While prints such as L'Argent and Le Triomphe may be seen to function symbolically, to be somehow outside the realm of ordinary time, these next three Intimités are distinguished by a degree of specificity. In them, Vallotton captures a single moment, freezing the actions of his two characters at a specific point, one from which a meaningful sequence of events may be reconstructed. In terms of narrative, these prints have more in common with, to use a comparison already made, Steinlen's drawing illustrating Le Triomphe du Coeur, than with Vallotton's own Le Mensonge.

In the dining room of Le Grand Moyen a meal has been abruptly interrupted. A man, just risen from the table, as is clear from the napkin he holds, tentatively extends his other hand toward a woman who stands in tears with her back to him, her face hidden in her napkin. The subject of this variation on the theme of woman's manipulation of man is fairly straightforward. The "extreme measure" is one last weapon in the arsenal woman employs in her power struggle with man. If all else fails she resorts to tears in an effort to break any resistance. L'Inmanquable (sic), a title Vallotton considered for this print, expresses his cynical view of the matter. That a woman should stoop to this kind of hypocrisy, this title asserts, is inevitable. On the other hand, the innocent male, passive to the end, is predictably dumbfounded by the outbreak and clearly unsure of how to respond, as his face reflects concern and perhaps surprise, but no suspicion.

There is a note of irony in this print which deserves mention. In

the picture on the wall, that hangs, appropriately, between the figures of man and woman, can be discerned the shapes of what seem to be the two heads of a couple seated closely beside one another.<sup>128</sup> With this quiet allusion to marital concord, Vallotton once again encouraged the comparison of the ideal of the couple with his own soured view of marital intimacy.

The scene depicted in La Raison Probante is of a casual parting between husband and wife as the woman prepares to leave on an errand. The chain of events is carefully laid out, the single moment presented implying what came before and what will follow. The man has been working at his desk, his wife comes and explains why she must go out (la raison probante), he leans back in his chair to kiss her goodbye, and then, one may presume, she will proceed to leave by the door on the right while he returns to his paperwork.

The apparent tranquility of this unassuming little scene is, of course, as deceptive as the woman herself. Another title which Vallotton seriously considered, La Course Pressée, helps to determine his intent. The "urgent errand," which she has so convincingly justified, is clearly of a suspicious nature. As in preceding prints the husband is the passive figure, ignorant of his wife's treachery, his eyes closed both literally and figuratively. Vallotton graphically demonstrates his blind trust in his wife in the way the deceived man leans his chair back onto two legs, supporting himself with his arm around the woman's waist.

Another of Vallotton's ironical touches can be identified in the bird adorned hat worn by the woman. While hats of this general design were in fashion at the end of the nineteenth century, Vallotton undoubtedly depicted this one in the shape of a dove for its symbolic content as



well. The woman who plays the loving wife, but is otherwise, is ironically portrayed wearing a symbol of purity and innocence. Both her appearance and demeanor are in direct contradiction to her true nature, Vallotton implies, as she leaves her husband, perhaps to meet a lover.

In Apprêts de Visite Vallotton reworked the theme of La Raison Probante, but with a variation. Once again a woman prepares to go out on what is certainly a dubious mission. The primary difference lies in the fact that this time the husband suspects that all is not well. He sits, hands in pockets, in the dark, with a gloomy look on his face, staring into space while his wife finishes her preparations before a mirror at her dressing table. She wears a self-satisfied, almost smug expression as she mists herself in some scent from an atomizer. This unconscious, self-absorbed attitude of hers, while the man slumped in the dark looks so disturbed, endows her with an aura of cruelty, something Vallotton was, doubtless, at pains to convey. In the preparatory drawing for Apprêts de Visite (Fig. 70) he gave the woman at the mirror a somber expression quite lacking in the smugness of the final version. In making the change Vallotton stressed the woman's deliberate insensitivity, marking her, once again, as the villain of the piece.

Vallotton experimented with numerous titles before settling on the neutral Apprêts de Visite. Considered were Toilette de Sortie, Apprêts de Sortie, Sortie Inquietante, Sombres Présages, Le Soupçon, and also La Course Pressée, the original title of La Raison Probante.<sup>129</sup> While the first two are minor variations on the title finally settled on, the following three point directly to the man's suspicions. In deciding on the more neutral title, Vallotton set up another opposition, this time between the obvious conflict apparent in the image and the matter-of-factness of the title.

In Le Grand Moyen, La Raison Probante, and Apprêts de Visite the specifics of story-telling take precedence over other facets of Vallotton's woodcut art. Form is limited to a primarily descriptive role. The play between two and three dimensions remains in force, but the element of the symbolic is missing. Black still predominates in these prints, and in Apprêts de Visite does convey the sense of an ominously dark, gloomy interior, but in the other two fails to do even that. The heavy reliance on black in these Intimités neither signals hidden dimensions of the couple and their relationship, nor contributes very much to the creation of a sense of atmosphere. A stylistic vocabulary which, in the best of Vallotton's woodcuts, can express meaning on several different levels simultaneously, is reduced to a stylish convention in these prints.

In the previously discussed seven prints, as in L'Irréparable, the last Intimités to be considered here shortly, it is the intimacy of marriage that Vallotton takes as his target. After establishing the corrupt grounds of such relationships, the artist elaborates on his theme, focusing on the manipulateness and hypocrisy of women. It has been argued here that Vallotton's primary intent in this series of prints was not the condemnation of women, though such a position would not have been out of keeping with one strain of contemporary sentiment, but the exposure of the falseness of the idealized intimacy of conventional marriage. Further support for this contention is provided by Cinq Heures (Fig. 38) and La Santé de l'Autre (Fig. 40), two Intimités which seem to demonstrate an intimacy between man and woman which is finally genuine. The key to understanding these two prints in the context of the Intimités lies in recognizing that these couples, unlike all of the others, are quite specifically not married. It is not intimacy which is impossible,

Vallotton implies, but intimacy within the bounds of conventional marriage.

That neither of these two prints is intended simply to present yet another variation of the married couple may not be immediately apparent to a modern viewer, but can be deduced from the visual evidence of the prints themselves. The illicit nature of the coupling in Cinq Heures is suggested by the starkness of the dark room in which the two embrace. This is not a cozy bourgeois bedroom of the kind described so carefully in La Belle Epingle. Rather, the room has the anonymous quality of some neutral meeting place. In addition, the woman's dress, as it is thrown carelessly across a chair, strongly intimates that she is not at home.

Perhaps even more revealing of the nature of the relationship between the man and woman is the title of the print, Cinq Heures. This particular hour of the day would have carried very specific associations for Vallotton's contemporaries. Anaïs Nin described exactly the sense of both title and print when she wrote:

At five o'clock Paris always has a current of eroticism in the air. Is it because it is the hour when lovers meet, the five to seven of all French novels? Never at night, it would seem, for all women are married and "free" only at "tea time," the great alibi.<sup>130</sup>

Cinq Heures may, then, be seen as a logical development of the theme, advanced in La Raison Probante and Apprêts de Visite, of woman's unfaithfulness. But on another level of meaning, as the only sincere embrace between a man and woman in a series of prints entitled Intimités, Cinq Heures also makes a definite statement about the context of true intimacy.

While many formal elements of Cinq Heures recall Le Mensonge (Fig. 32), from the silhouetted forms of the armchairs, to the white shape of the tablecloth, and even to the embracing couple, the unusual composition of

the print, with the figures of man and woman positioned all the way to one side and even cut off by the edge of the print, suggests the influence, once again, of a specific work of Munch's. The northern artist treated the theme of the embracing couple numerous times in his work. One of the earliest instances was a painting executed in 1892, The Kiss (Fig. 71). Very possibly exhibited in Paris prior to 1898,<sup>131</sup> this painting of a couple standing by a window bears a notable resemblance to Vallotton's print in terms of the subject and the general compositional scheme.

The extra-marital character of the relationship portrayed in La Santé de l'Autre (Fig. 40) is not as deliberately signaled by the title as it was in Cinq Heures, but evidence provided by the image itself is sufficient to establish this point. A woman, clothed only in a chemise, kneels behind a seated man, her left arm around him, while with her right hand she holds a small cup to his lips. The gesture, in fact her whole demeanor expresses solicitude, tenderness and concern for his well-being--la santé de l'autre. The couple's surroundings, in particular, the bearskin rug and the sofa strewn with variously patterned pillows, over an end of which a sheet or blanket is curiously draped, exhibit a certain informality which is unlike the more conventional furnishings of the other Intimités. The presence of the sheet quietly suggests that the sofa may serve double duty as a bed. The dark sofa itself, covered with variously patterned pillows is quite unlike the formal couches of the proper bourgeois living rooms of other Intimités. This style of furnishing is, instead, reminiscent of a similar arrangement in another of Vallotton's woodcuts, La Paresse (Fig. 5), executed just two years earlier, in 1896. It is tempting to see an iconographic link between the two prints, in the use of this sofa or daybed strewn with boldly patterned



pillows. La Paresse portrays a langorous, sensual female nude, an ideal woman, removed from any social context, and far from the battlefields of contemporary marriage. Her environment of ease and sensuality finds a formal equivalent in the patterned spread and pillows on which she lies. Carrying the association over into La Santé de l'Autre, the solicitous woman may be perceived as a sort of sister to the woman of La Paresse, brought, in this case, into the realm of ordinary experience, but still comfortably established outside the gates of conventional respectability.<sup>132</sup>

If Cinq Heures might be seen to mark the woman's escape from the emptiness of marriage into a passionate intimacy elsewhere, La Santé de l'Autre seems to show the man's refuge in a relationship which can supply the affection and tenderness impossible from the wife. In these two prints Vallotton affirmed the existence of intimacy between the sexes, and if he could not avoid making barbed attacks on the woman's infidelity specifically, this aspect is less important than the broader message that intimacy is possible outside of marriage only.

Formally, La Santé de l'Autre is, perhaps, the weakest of the Intimités, with the figures of man and woman both awkwardly delineated. The man's torso has a bloated, rather balloon-like appearance, as if his shirt really were stuffed, while his legs, ineffectively indicated by fine, broken, white lines on a black field, have a ghostly immateriality. The body of the woman is also awkwardly proportioned.

These disturbing weaknesses, combined with a general blandness of composition, naturally prompt speculation about why such a print was included in the Intimités. A clue to this puzzle may be provided by the absence of any listing of the print in Vallotton's otherwise very complete

record book, his Livre de Raison. It is possible that La Santé de l'Autre was produced as an afterthought, in the haste that such circumstances would encourage. It may be established from a list of titles written on the reverse of a preparatory drawing for Le Grand Moyen,<sup>133</sup> that at that point Vallotton still considered L'Eclat and L'Emotion as part of the series. This would have put Vallotton's total at eight prints and have left only two more to be completed. At some time thereafter, however, the artist decided not to include L'Eclat and L'Emotion and so had to fill out the ten in some other way. That Apprêts de Visite, which is essentially a reworking of the theme of La Raison Probante, was the second to the last Intimités print listed in the Livre de Raison, suggests that Vallotton's ideas for the set may have been fairly well exhausted by this time. And yet, thematically La Santé de l'Autre is significant to the sense of the whole in a way that Apprêts de Visite is not. It may be that, having focused his idea of the Intimités as a whole, and thus having to eliminate the two prints listed earlier, Vallotton recognized one additional point needed to fill out the series, but could no longer summon much interest in the formal problems of variations on two people in a room.

L'Irréparable (Fig. 41) is listed last of the Intimités in the Livre de Raison, which is appropriate as this print constitutes a thematic conclusion to the set. Though the Intimités do not align themselves in any strict order, this print stands as a logical finale to Vallotton's exposé of marital intimacy in much the same way that L'Argent may be said to mark its beginning. L'Irréparable makes one final, unavoidable statement about the condition of such intimacy. Having traced its deceptive start and outlined its thorny course, as marred by an essential power

struggle, Vallotton finally presents in this image the couple's mutual recognition of the distance between them and of the impossibility of intimacy. The illusion of intimacy is completely shattered; what remains is the certain knowledge that, although joined, the distance between the two is unbridgeable.

L'Irréparable is closely linked to Le Triomphe (Fig. 33) both formally and thematically. Overwhelmingly black and enormously somber, this print constitutes a fitting conclusion to the process of emotional warfare which Le Triomphe describes. The predominant black of L'Irréparable functions much as it does in Le Triomphe. While the two figures are perceived of as separate, they are joined by this black. The curve of the back of the sofa on which they both sit and the black of the lower three quarters of the print combine to unite man and woman, while at the same time, there is enormous psychological distance between them. As in Le Triomphe a woman sits severely upright to the left, her body undistinguished from the expanse of black which covers most of the print, her hands quietly crossed in her lap, and her head isolated in the one area of blank white of the print. The man on the right, while not portrayed in the state of physical collapse of his counterpart in Le Triomphe, may be observed to slouch perceptibly, his body slack and his gaze directed blankly out into space.

The issue of the victor and the vanquished, which is central to the meaning of Le Triomphe, surfaces again in L'Irréparable. Although the title refers to the realization of irreparable differences between man and woman and marks the end of any illusion of intimacy, their respective responses to this knowledge can be read in their different postures. The stiff-backed frontal pose of the woman once again points to her

unyielding strength and gives her a somehow triumphant look, while the slackness of the man seems to indicate a sense of defeat. In keeping with the specifically male perspective of this set, L'Irréparable is, most particularly, the man's conclusion to the Intimités. It is he, in particular, who realizes the hopelessness of this kind of relationship and finally gives up on a struggle he was losing from the start. The woman remains, as always, incomprehensible and even smug. An almost imperceptible change in her facial expression from the preparatory drawing (Fig. 72) to the finished woodcut, demonstrates that her characterization as emotionally untouched and self-satisfied was, indeed, intentional. Sympathy is very much with the man whose defeated posture is echoed in the drooping leaves of the plant behind him.

L'Irréparable also shares with Le Triomphe a probable link to the work of Munch. This link is manifested, in the general sense, in the symbolic expression of the isolation of man and woman. Though joined together, psychologically the two exists in utter isolation one from the other. They are, in a sense, Munch's Lonely Ones (Fig. 73)<sup>134</sup> turned around to face the viewer. More specifically, both the form and content of the print strongly suggest Munch's Three Stages of Woman (Fig. 74) as a source.<sup>135</sup> Vallotton seems to have found in the two figures on the right side of the other's painting, an expression of despair and hopelessness caused by the failure of the relationship between man and woman, that suited his theme and which could provide the impetus for his own L'Irréparable. Among the three women, who represent stages in women's lives relative to their relations with men, the woman in black, on the right, stands for the experienced woman, she who has lived and loved and is now without illusions. The man at the far right who seems to be bleeding,



is he who is mortally wounded by his encounter with woman. While in meaning, Munch's painting is more universal in scope than Vallotton's print, the obvious similarity in subject matter, coupled with the striking formal similarities between the two, strongly suggest that Munch's work did provide the model for L'Irréparable. In each work the woman faces directly forward, her body, frontal and erect, is held perfectly still. In each the man is turned slightly to the right, away from the woman, his body slumped forward slightly while a pained expression can be read in his face. The sense of despair and defeat are very much alike in Vallotton's and Munch's figures. In addition, the general composition of Munch's painting as a whole might be compared to L'Irréparable, with the open, light expanse in the upper left corner and the darkness of the right side in which the figure of the man is almost lost. While Munch seems to hide the figure of the broken man in the trees, Vallotton shelters his under an enormous house plant.

The considerable similarities between Munch's Three Stages of Woman and Vallotton's L'Irréparable make the essential differences between the two all the clearer. Vallotton as an artist has neither the unity of vision nor the drive to express an intensely felt personal philosophy which Munch had, as discussed earlier. While Munch tried to give visual expression to what he saw as universal truths concerning relations between the sexes, in the Intimités, his contemporary, Vallotton, focused on intimacy in a specific social context--marriage. While Munch was in deadly earnest, Vallotton remained something of the amused, if cynical, observer, ever alert to the ridiculous. Even in an image of the strength of L'Irréparable, he cannot resist the counterpoint of the somewhat absurd fish on the vase, just as in La Santé de l'Autre, he has the bear

rug gaze blankly out at the viewer, or adorns the hat of the woman in La Raison Probante with what appears to be a whole stuffed bird.

Before concluding this discussion of the Intimités, the two prints, mentioned earlier, which Vallotton created for the series, but later eliminated, should be briefly considered. As rejected prints, they, as does the first version of La Belle Epingle, offer insights into the artist's conception of the Intimités. That Vallotton deemed both prints successful may be deduced from the fact that relatively large editions of each were printed, over 100 in the case of L'Eclat, and over 300 of L'Emotion, which was published in an album of prints by various artists.<sup>136</sup> Vallotton's reasons for dropping them from the Intimités are not to be found in some internal weakness of the prints, but rather in the fact that each was somehow out of place thematically in the artist's evolved conception of the series.

L'Eclat (Fig. 75) is a formally striking woodcut of a couple arguing which is marked by bold juxtapositions of black and white and the enjoyment of pattern for its own sake. In format and style and, generally, in subject, L'Eclat could easily be an Intimités print. But closer examination of the nature of the outburst presented suggests why Vallotton cut this print from the ranks of the final ten. The man and woman are engaged in what appears to be an overt battle of wills. He angrily confronts the woman with a piece of paper, a letter or a bill, perhaps, while she leans toward him, as if to counter his arguments with her own. It is the overt nature of this rather commonplace conflict which is unlike the Intimités. In those prints the battle usually remains subterranean, while deceptive calm is outwardly projected. Vallotton, in a sense, says too much in L'Eclat; he loses the curious tension which runs through

the Intimités, and which endows them with much of their strength. Perhaps just as important to the elimination of L'Eclat is the fact that Vallotton has here created an aggressively angry man, one who confronts his wife. In the Intimités he portrays man as a victim of woman, as sensitive and tender and essentially passive, as a figure who deserves the viewer's sympathy.

L'Emotion (Fig. 76), on the other hand, a highly effective print, has the undercurrent of anxiety and tension that L'Eclat lacks. A couple engaged in some manner of tête-à-tête are startled by a door opening, the implication clearly being that they feel somewhat uneasy about being found together, a point also supported by two titles considered and discarded, La Surprise and L'Inquiétude. But, unlike the Intimités, their anxiety is directed not at each other, but outward, to a third party. Their's is a slightly guilty intimacy, but a real one nonetheless. And who these two are is also unclear. Are they an adulterous couple, a subject not out of keeping with the Intimités, or just nervous young lovers? Unlike in Cinq Heures and La Santé de L'Autre, there is no indication of the social context of their relationship. As a view of intimacy, this print has an indefiniteness, not to mention a lack of bite, which is unlike the Intimités.

Both L'Eclat and L'Emotion, then, show Vallotton experimenting with aspects of intimacy, or variations on relations between the sexes, that had to be discarded as the specific idea of marital intimacy as emotional warfare became the central theme of the series. L'Emotion, while a powerful image, does not relate specifically to this theme. L'Eclat, which does focus on friction between a couple, takes overt conflict as its subject, rather than the more devious, subterranean variety of the Intimités.

### Conclusion

The Intimités mark one of Vallotton's last efforts in the woodcut medium; soon after he turned his energies almost exclusively to his painting which occupied him for the remainder of his life. In 1900 the artist married into a wealthy family and was no longer troubled by the financial worries that had plagued him throughout his early years in Paris and which had originally prompted his production of graphic work. But although Vallotton never felt his graphic work to be as important as his painting and ceased to pursue that direction when only in his thirties, the Intimités demonstrate a certain mastery which was recognized by the artist's contemporaries and which still deserves attention.

While a logical development of Vallotton's woodcut production, these prints demonstrate an integration of expressive modes and levels of meaning which surpasses much of the artist's earlier graphic work. The Intimités stand as a singularly fine example of Vallotton's woodcut art and also clearly reveal the artist's primary debts, to developments in the fine arts, and to contemporary illustrators. Among other things, Vallotton's sources are apparent in the two approaches to narrative found in these prints. Certain of the Intimités adhere to the anecdotal mode of illustration and genre painting, while in others content is communicated through a kind of formal symbolism which seems to have specific origins in the work of Edvard Munch.

The Intimités may also be examined as a remarkable expression of a specific intellectual climate and of an artist whose critical, often pessimistic, turn of mind so clearly reflected his time. The artist whose



prints André Thérive labeled "...un réquisitoire contre l'humanité,..."<sup>137</sup> reveals himself in these woodcuts, as in others, as a harsh indicator of contemporary society. In the specific focus of the Intimités, the falsehood of marital intimacy, Vallotton treated an issue of great contemporaneity. The "woman problem" fueled many imaginations in the late nineteenth century and Vallotton's male-oriented exposé of relations between the sexes participated in a wide-spread condemnation of a deceptive, destructive, and generally untrustworthy "modern woman."

Any real understanding of the graphic art of Félix Vallotton requires the recognition of the two distinct strains of image-making which were essential to his art. Both developments in progressive French art and directions pursued in popular art were decisive in the formation of his woodcut art. Too little attention has been granted in the past to the significance of the popular arts of the late nineteenth century, in relation to Vallotton's work, and also for the broader artistic scene. Vallotton's woodcuts, like the graphic works of Toulouse-Lautrec, are inconceivable in isolation from the nineteenth century illustrative tradition.

In this paper I have drawn on only a few examples to illustrate the close relationship between certain of Vallotton's prints and this tradition. It is difficult to establish the full extent of this relationship given the paucity of available information on popular arts of the nineteenth century. It seems very clear that such work played an important role in the artistic life of the time, as it provided a wealth of visual images through the most commonly accessible medium, the newspaper. Artists such as Steinlen and Forain, as they gave visual form to the interests and attitudes of their contemporaries, produced what may be seen as an

almost endless supply of visual ideas, regardless of quality. Particularly intriguing are questions of style which also arise in considering the relationship between the popular and fine arts at the end of the century. These and other issues deserve further attention if much of the "mainstream" art of this period is to be fully understood.

As one of the pioneers of the revival of the artist's woodcut at the beginning of the last decade of the nineteenth century, Félix Vallotton may be seen as a transitional figure in the evolution of the modern woodcut. Abandoning the predominantly eclectic approach to the medium of his contemporaries in the early 1890s, Vallotton allowed the nature of the woodcut technique to help determine his style. Artists such as Munch and Gauguin, who certainly knew Vallotton's work and were influenced by it to some degree, were to carry the implications of his woodcut style a step further, exploiting the roughness of the cutting process and manipulating the raw, unrefined qualities of the woodcut for expressive purposes. This was not Vallotton's direction, but he showed the way, while his considerable reputation contributed to the popularization of the woodcut technique.

While a thorough study remains to be written, Vallotton's artistic legacy seems to have been extensive. As he established an aesthetic based on the stark opposition of broad areas of black and white, Vallotton defined, for many, the language of the modern woodcut. Many artists followed suit in the 1890s and after the turn of the century. Beardsley and William Nicholson, Will Bradley and Laboureur, to name only a few, all owe a debt to Vallotton, while in Germany, both Kandinsky and Kirchner's first woodcuts seem to have been a direct response to Vallotton's prints.<sup>138</sup> An artist whose work was widely known and admired during the transitional

years of the late nineteenth century, Vallotton played an important role in the development of modern graphic art.

### Footnotes

<sup>1</sup>Octave Uzanne, "La Renaissance de la gravure sur bois: un néo-xylographe," L'Art et l'Idée, Feb. 1892, pp. 113-9.

<sup>2</sup>Neither Munch nor Gauguin, two artists of the late nineteenth century well-known for their woodcuts, had begun working in the medium this early in the decade. Munch's first woodcuts date from 1896, while Gauguin's date from 1893-5.

<sup>3</sup>It has become easy, perhaps, to underestimate Vallotton's impact on his contemporaries. His style, which has had such an impact on graphic design, now appears something of a cliché. As early as 1907 one commentator pointed to the problem when he wrote:

Now we are used to the products of Aubrey Beardsley and his apostles, their disciples and all followers of the bizarre in black and white, but at the time Vallotton began putting forth his woodcuts, nothing of the sort had been seen in France. (Gardner C. Teall, "The Unusual woodcuts of Félix Vallotton," The Craftsman, vol. XII, 1907, p. 161.)

However tame Vallotton's production may appear in comparison, for example, to the woodcuts of the German Expressionists, in 1891, when he began printing from woodblocks, his work stood apart as a startlingly new and personal use of the medium.

<sup>4</sup>Raymond Bouyer, "Les Graveurs sur bois de fil au Canif," L'Estampe et l'Affiche, Dec. 15, 1899, p. 227.

<sup>5</sup>Julius Meier-Graefe, Félix Vallotton, Paris, 1898.

<sup>6</sup>On this issue see Kenworth Moffett, Meier-Graefe as Art Critic, Munich, 1973.

<sup>7</sup>Hedy Hahnloser, Félix Vallotton, I: Der Graphiker, Zurich, 1927.

<sup>8</sup>Hedy Hahnloser-Bühler, Félix Vallotton et ses Ans, Paris, 1936.

<sup>9</sup>Fritz Hermann, Die Revue Blanche und die Nabis, Munich, 1959, pp. 193-196, 276-307.

<sup>10</sup>Maxime Vallotton and Charles Goerg, Félix Vallotton, Catalogue Raisonné de l'oeuvre gravé et lithographié, Geneva, 1972.

<sup>11</sup>Gilbert Guisan and Doris Jakubec, Félix Vallotton: Documents pour une biographie et pour l'histoire d'une oeuvre, Lausanne-Paris, 1973-1975.

<sup>12</sup>Ashley St. James, Vallotton: Graphics, London, 1978. This book is also inadequate in its failure to consider the important issue of the role of popular art for Vallotton's woodcuts. St. James is currently engaged in writing a dissertation on Vallotton for the Courtauld, Félix Vallotton: The Nabis Years.



St. James also collaborated, with Mary Anne Stevens, on one of the better catalogues to be published recently in conjunction with a Vallotton show, The Graphic Work of Félix Vallotton, London, 1976.

<sup>13</sup>A part of the explanation for why these prints have not received more attention lies in the fact that the edition of the Intimités was limited to thirty and sets are difficult to locate, especially in this country.

<sup>14</sup>Gabriel Mourey, The Studio, March 15, 1899, reprinted in Guisan and Jakubec I, p. 256.

<sup>15</sup>Bouyer, 1899, p. 245.

<sup>16</sup>André Thérive, preface to Félix Vallotton, La Vie Meurtrière, Lausanne, 1930, p. xiv.

<sup>17</sup>One of the few exceptions is his fantastical Roger et Angelique (VG 168).

<sup>18</sup>Meier-Graefe, p. 41.

<sup>19</sup>Vallotton greatly admired artists such as Ingres and Holbein, something which can be established from his letters. See Guisan and Jakubec I.

<sup>20</sup>Vallotton, 1930, p. 58.

<sup>21</sup>Ola Hansson, "L'Imagination Créatrice," Die Zukunft, April 4, 1896, reprinted in translation in Guisan and Jakubec I, p. 273.

<sup>22</sup>While the literature is silent on the question of whether Vallotton printed his woodcuts himself, since many of his prints are pulled in small editions and several states are known for some, it seems likely that he did. The issue is of limited interest as pure whites and opaque blacks were the only requirements for proper printing.

<sup>23</sup>Claude Roger-Marx, L'Estampe Originale, Paris, 1893, p. 3.

<sup>24</sup>Hermann, p. 278.

<sup>25</sup>Lucien Pissarro was a son of Camille Pissarro who settled in England. His place in the history of woodcut is briefly discussed in Herbert Furst, The Modern Woodcut, London, 1924, p. 73.

<sup>26</sup>Meier-Graefe complained that archaism was everywhere in English woodcuts. Meier-Graefe, p. 13.

<sup>27</sup>The periodical called L'Ymagier was founded by Remy de Gourmont "to encourage and protect" the production of such work. See Wladyslawa Jaworska, Gauguin and the Pont-Aven School, Greenwich, Conn., 1972, p. 228.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid. Bernard seems to have become generally enamored with medieval art around 1890.

<sup>29</sup>S. Bing, to name one important figure promoting Japanese art at this

time, dealt in Japanese art in Paris and was responsible for the periodical, Le Japon Artistique, which began publication in 1888 and ran until 1891.

<sup>30</sup>Jacques Lethève and Françoise Gardey, Inventaire du Fonds Français après 1800, t. 14, Paris, 1967, p. 21.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid., p. 20. The authors state that Lepère's place in the history of gravure is perhaps disproportionate with the worth of his work. "Mais son rôle dans l'évolution de la gravure sur bois a été, en effet, capital."

<sup>32</sup>Opinion is by no means uniform on the question of who influenced Vallotton's turn to the medium of woodcut. Maxime Vallotton lists various opinions in The Graphic Art of Vallotton and the Nabis, Chicago, 1970, p. 5.

Maurin has attracted attention in his own right lately. An exhibition of his work was assembled in 1978 by the Musée Crozatier in Le Puy, France, Charles Maurin, peintre, dessinateur, graveur, 1856-1914.

<sup>33</sup>Hahnloser-Bühler, 1936, p. 59.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., p. 63.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., p. 60. Hahnloser-Bühler, who knew Vallotton well, was of this opinion. Hermann states that it was through Maurin that Vallotton became part of the circle including Toulouse-Lautrec, Joyant, and others, which came together when Joyant became director of Goupil in 1890 (p. 194).

<sup>36</sup>1891 was also the last year Vallotton exhibited his work in the Salon. The catalogue lists ten paintings, nine of which were for sale. Catalogue des Oeuvres Exposées, Société des Artistes Indépendants, 1891, p. 62.

<sup>37</sup>Originally published in Art et Critique, August 1890, in "Définition du Néo-Traditionnisme." Reprinted in Maurice Denis, Théories 1890-1910, Paris, 1920, p. 1.

<sup>38</sup>Hermann calls Le Bain au Soir d'Eté a good illustration of Denis' definition of painting. Hermann, p. 195.

<sup>39</sup>The first letter known documenting their friendship dates from 1894, but the two could have become acquainted through their joint involvement with the Académie Julian and also the Revue Blanche. In addition, Vallotton exhibited with the Nabis in 1893 at Le Barc de Boutteville.

<sup>40</sup>Hermann, p. 279.

<sup>41</sup>This ridiculing stance finds its parallel in Vallotton's friend, Jules Renard's, brief journal entry of 17 Feb. 1890. "Cherchez le ridicule en tout, vous le trouverez." Jules Renard, Journal, Paris, 1960, p. 43.

<sup>42</sup>Max Kozloff points out, in "Four Short Essays on Vuillard," Art Forum, vol. X, no. 4, Dec. 1971, p. 68, that the 1890s was a time when "the myths of humanism, and, indeed, the archetypes of middle-class existence, were

under the most intense fire from the artistic left."

<sup>43</sup>He executed primarily lithograph portraits of contemporary figures for the periodical.

<sup>44</sup>Described at length in A. B. Jackson, La Revue Blanche, 1889-1903, Paris, 1960.

<sup>45</sup>Thérive, in his preface to Vallotton's La Vie Meurtrière, wrote, "Il aimait à deviner la réalité poignante and terrible sous les apparences banales dont elles se déguise," (p. xiii).

<sup>46</sup>From Mirbeau's preface for L'Exposition de Peintures de Félix Vallotton, Paris, 1910. Cited in Rudolf Koella, Félix Vallotton im Kunsthaus Zürich, 1969, p. 55.

<sup>47</sup>Finding an appropriate English word for the French caricature is a problem. In French the word does not refer specifically to the exaggeration of distinguishing features, but may denote any kind of cartoon or satirical drawing. In English "political cartoon" is a recognized label, but no equivalent word exists for cartoons satirizing "manners," in French satire de mœurs.

<sup>48</sup>For example, the stock market.

<sup>49</sup>Philippe Roberts-Jones, De Daumier à Lautrec (Essai sur l'histoire de la caricature française entre 1860 et 1890), Paris, 1960, p. 12. Roberts-Jones, who is Belgian, is one of the very few serious students of nineteenth century satirical drawings. His book of 1960 grew from his doctoral dissertation for the Université Libre de Bruxelles, completed in 1954.

<sup>50</sup>One of the only discussions of Vallotton's illustrative work can be found in Gisèle Lambert, L'Assiette au Beurre et les Illustrateurs de L'Assiette au Beurre (1901-1906), Paris, 1974.

<sup>51</sup>Beardsley never did any woodcuts.

<sup>52</sup>Bonnard's France-Champagne and Toulouse-Lautrec's Moulin Rouge, both of 1891, marked a dramatic change in the poster aesthetic.

<sup>53</sup>See, for example, Toulouse-Lautrec's Milliner (JA 17) of 1893 and Vallotton's woodcut (VG 138) of 1894 and lithograph (VG 54) of 1896 of the same subject. Vallotton's L'Etranger (VG 137) of 1894, one of his few prints dealing with the night-time entertainment scene, is reminiscent of some of Toulouse-Lautrec's work, as well.

<sup>54</sup>As Eugenia Herbert has written:

The great graphic artists of the mid- and later century were, of necessity, illustrators and caricaturists. While their subject matter varied according to what they were illustrating, they generally supplied at least a portion of their work to the press and became, in consequence, interpreters of contemporary life.

Eugenia Herbert, The Artist and Social Reform, France and Belgium 1885-1898, New Haven, 1961, p. 66.



<sup>55</sup>Anne Coffin Hanson, "Popular Imagery and the Work of Edouard Manet," in French Nineteenth Century Painting and Literature, Manchester, 1972, p. 134. Hanson's comments are made in reference to Manet, but apply equally well to Vallotton.

<sup>56</sup>That Steinlen's image was Vallotton's source is also supported by their dates. La Femme au Chat was published Feb. 16, 1896. Vallotton's Livre de Raison lists La Paresse as the sixth out of thirty-one items for 1896, which would place it sometime early in the year. As an illustration for a short story, the Steinlen drawing was certainly commissioned somewhat in advance and with specific subject requirements, making an influence in the other direction unlikely. Vallotton's own record book, his Livre de Raison, is reproduced in Hahnloser-Bühler, 1936, 275ff.

<sup>57</sup>Vallotton and Goerg, p. 203.

<sup>58</sup>The issuing, in a very limited edition, of a set of related prints, such as the Intimités, was well preceded at the close of the nineteenth century. Vallotton had himself produced several woodcut sets during his short career in the graphic arts, including his well-known Instruments de Musique of 1896-7. Both Vuillard and Bonnard, encouraged by the dealer Ambroise Vollard, executed sets of lithograph prints in the 1890s and Toulouse-Lautrec created the Elles set of ten lithographs, which aroused much interest in artistic circles, in 1896.

<sup>59</sup>Livre de Raison in Hahnloser-Bühler, 1936, pp. 282-283.

<sup>60</sup>Vallotton and Goerg call this folder a "folio album," (p. 203). The set, as issued, also included a cancelation print, made up of pieces of the ten Intimités (Fig. 31).

<sup>61</sup>This listing repeats the order by which Vallotton listed the prints in his Livre de Raison, except for La Santé de l'Autre, which he failed to cite.

<sup>62</sup>Jean Schopfer, "The Woodcuts of Félix Vallotton," The Book Buyer, May 1900, p. 297.

<sup>63</sup>Ibid., p. 297. Max Kozloff refers to the "almost chameleonlike identification of figures with their spaces" in certain of Vuillard's paintings. Kozloff, p. 67.

<sup>64</sup>Guisan and Jakubec III, p. 187.

<sup>65</sup>Vallotton had an extended and peaceful, to judge from his letters, relationship with a working class woman during the 1890s. In 1900 he married and remained happily so for the remainder of his life. Vallotton also counted accomplished women among his friends, as his correspondence shows. See Guisan and Jakubec I.

From the letters of Vuillard to Vallotton it appears that towards the end of 1897 Vallotton was in a depressed state. Guisan and Jakubec speculate that the reasons for this might be "...d'ordre sentimental," but there is no real evidence of any kind.



<sup>66</sup>For discussions of the femme fatale see Werner Hofmann's chapter "Woman as Myth" in his The Earthly Paradise: Art in the Nineteenth Century, New York, 1961, 319ff. See also Hoffman Reynolds Hays, The Dangerous Sex: The Myth of Feminine Evil, New York, 1964. Also see Martha Kingsbury, "The Femme Fatale and Her Sisters," and Alessandra Comini, "Vampires, Virgins and Voyeurs in Imperial Vienna," both in Woman as Sex Object, New York, 1972.

<sup>67</sup>A list of a few examples which are representative of a great body of literature in France would include:

Octave Uzanne, Son Altesse la Femme, Histoire Psychologique de la Femme Française depuis la moyen âge jusqu'à l'heure présente, 1885.

Léopold Lacour, "La Question de la Femme," Revue Franco-Américaine, July 1895, p. 33-7.

Charles Bonnier, L'Avenir du Mariage, 1896.

Paola Lombroso, "Le Bonheur des Femmes," La Revue des Revues, 1897, p. 301.

Jules Bois, La Femme Inquiète, 1897.

Henry Rabusson, L'Hostilité Conjugale, 1903.

Among Scandinavian playwrights, Strindberg and Ibsen, who both gained considerable reputations in Paris in the 1890s, treated the issue of changing relations between men and women with new strength. For a discussion of their reception in Paris, see A. Dikka Reque, Trois Auteurs Dramatiques Scandinaves, Ibsen, Björnson Strindberg, devant la critique Française, 1889-1901, Paris, 1930.

Interest in the "woman question" reached its peak in England in the 1890s as well, as discussed in A.R. Cunningham, "The 'New Woman Fiction' of the 1890s," Victorian Studies, vol. XVII, no. 2, Dec. 1973, pp. 177-8. A survey run by the London Daily Telegraph of 1888 asked its readers, "Is marriage a failure?", to which the majority answered in the affirmative. Jenni Calder, Women and Marriage in Victorian Fiction, New York, 1976, p. 168.

<sup>68</sup>La Revue des Revues, 1897, p. 168.

<sup>69</sup>In 1911 John Grand-Carteret stated in the preface to his Les Trois Formes de l'union sexuelle: Mariage, Collage, Chiennerie, Paris, 1911, that his reason for putting together the book, which is largely a collection of writings on male-female relations from antiquity to the present, was to show that the idea of the failure of marriage, while claiming to be very modern, was in reality very old. Grand-Carteret also includes an extensive bibliography on the subject.

<sup>70</sup>Laura Marholm Hansson, We Women and our Authors, New York, 1899.

<sup>71</sup>Ibid., p. 169. Regarding August Strindberg, Getting Married, New York, 1972 (first published in two volumes, 1884 and 1886).

<sup>72</sup>Werner Timm, The Graphic Art of Edvard Munch, Greenwich, Conn., 1972, p. 36.

<sup>73</sup>Hays notes a new version of the femme fatale appearing in theater in the last years of the nineteenth century, a type of woman who "...as

the result of the Western revolt of women, (was) endowed with a new sense of independence and a ruthlessness not encountered before." Hays, p. 251.

<sup>74</sup>Laura Hansson actually made the connection between the Scandinavian movement for women's emancipation and Strindberg's misogyny. Hansson, p. 169-170.

<sup>75</sup>Arvède Barine, Journal des Débats, August 6, 1892, as cited in Reque, p. 153.

<sup>76</sup>August Strindberg, Eight Famous Plays, New York, 1949, pp. 107-108. Miss Julie was published in 1888.

<sup>77</sup>Guy de Maupassant, Notre Coeur, Paris, 1909, p. 299.

<sup>78</sup>Ibid., p. 142.

<sup>79</sup>Hahnloser-Bühler, 1936, p. 153.

<sup>80</sup>Jules Renard, La Maîtresse, Geneva-Paris, 1944 (first published Paris, 1896 with illustrations by Vallotton).

<sup>81</sup>Paul d'Armen in Le Voltaire, July 20, 1896, as cited in Renard, 1944, pp. 107-108.

<sup>82</sup>Gaston Olmer in L'Art et la Vie, Nov. 1896, as cited in Renard, 1944, p. 109.

<sup>83</sup>St. James, 1978, p. 11.

<sup>84</sup>Also Les Bas Bleus (1844) and Les Femmes Socialistes (1849)

<sup>85</sup>Lorenz Eitner cites a revival of genre painting of international scope occurring about 1810 in "The Open Window and the Storm-Tossed Boat: An Essay in the Iconography of Romanticism," The Art Bulletin, vol. 37, 1955, p. 283.

<sup>86</sup>Hofmann, 1961, 361.

<sup>87</sup>William Gaunt, The Restless Century: Painting in Britian, 1800-1900, London, 1972, with plate 142.

<sup>88</sup>Norma Broude cites Quentin Bell's and Theodore Reff's theories of specific Zola sources for the paintings. The titles the paintings now go by were not Degas's. Norma Broude, "Degas's 'Misogyny'," The Art Bulletin, vol. 59, p. 96.

<sup>89</sup>From a journal entry of Dec. 23, 1914, in Guisan and Jakubec III, p. 48.

<sup>90</sup>Vuillard's ties to the theater are discussed by John Russell, Vuillard, Greenwich, Conn., 1971, pp. 25, 35, 49.

<sup>91</sup>Vuillard's portrait of him was reproduced above (Fig. 14).



<sup>92</sup>Maurice Beaubourg, La Vie Muette, Paris, 1894.

<sup>93</sup>Vuillard did other paintings which are clearly of performances, including Jeanne Raunay dans Iphigénie and Scène de Théâtre, which Russell feels is probably from Maeterlinck's Pélias et Mélisande, both of ca. 1892. Reproduced in Russell, figs. 26 and 27.

<sup>94</sup>Russell recognized the general relationship between Vuillard's La Vie Conjugale and the theater when he wrote "Vuillard the dramatist has no finer monument than this painting, which speaks to us like a scene from an unwritten play by Chekhov," (pp. 32, 49).

<sup>95</sup>As noted by Roberts-Jones, p. 10.

<sup>96</sup>Ibid., p. 72.

<sup>97</sup>Raoul Deberdt, La Caricature et l'Humour Français au XIX<sup>e</sup> Siècle, Paris, 1899 (first published in the Revue Encyclopédique, no. 226, 1898), p. 210.

<sup>98</sup>Ibid., p. 210.

<sup>99</sup>Ibid., p. 210.

<sup>100</sup>Others of this type, published in Gil Blas and other periodicals, include:

Rupture d'Automne, 1894

Avant et Après, 1895

Ma Femme et Moi, 1895

Lendemain, 1896

Variations sur la Harpe, 1897

<sup>101</sup>St. James, Félix Vallotton and the Graphic Art of Edvard Munch, CAA 1979.

<sup>102</sup>Munch learned color lithography in Paris in 1895, working with A. Clot and Lemer cier, and was well aware of the state of graphic arts there. Frederick B. Deknatel, Edvard Munch, New York, 1950, p. 35. Timm suggests, as have others, that the combination of dark figures with softly rounded contours arranged rhythmically in the picture space of Vallotton's woodcuts influenced Munch. This apparent influence is particularly striking in prints such as Munch's Death Chamber (1896) and in portraits such as his Self-Portrait of 1895, which may be compared to Vallotton's woodcut portrait of Dostoevski of the same year. Timm, p. 27.

Most recently, Bente Torjusen, in "The Mirror," Edvard Munch: Symbols and Images, Washington, 1978, has asserted that Munch was undoubtedly familiar with Vallotton's work even before coming to Paris in 1896. He would have seen his prints in the German periodical, Pan, and in the Revue Blanche. Additional evidence of a connection is provided by the fact that in 1896 a friend of Munch's wrote to him asking him to put together a portfolio of Vallotton's work for an article he wanted to write. Torjusen, pp. 194-195.

Munch did no woodcuts until 1896. His work in that medium demonstrates an interest in exploiting the grain of the wood itself for

expressive ends which is quite unlike Vallotton and which bears a closer relationship to the woodcuts of Gauguin.

<sup>103</sup>Reinhold Heller discusses Munch's participation in "international symbolism" in "Love as a Series of Paintings and a Matter of Life and Death, Edvard Munch in Berlin, 1892-1895, Epilogue, 1902," in Edvard Munch, Symbols and Images, Washington, 1978, p. 103.

<sup>104</sup>This is not surprising as Vallotton's correspondance contains remarkably little about his art and he began keeping a journal only at the outbreak of World War I.

<sup>105</sup>1896

797. L'Enfant Malade  
798. Rose et Amélie  
799. Portrait  
800. Portrait  
801. Femme qui Aime  
802. Des Mains  
803. La Mort qui Aime  
804. Le Cri  
805. Cheveux Rouges  
806. Café Chantant

1897

825. Eté  
826. Nuit claire  
827. Soir  
828. Angoisse  
829. Baiser  
830. La Femme  
831. L'homme jaloux  
832. La Mort  
833. L'homme mourant  
834. Portraits de M.X. et M.C.

Société des Artistes Indépendants, Catalogue des Oeuvres Exposées, 1896, pp. 58-59; 1897, p. 60.

<sup>106</sup>Ingrid Langaard, Edvard Munch Modningsår, Oslo, 1960, p. 460.

<sup>107</sup>Bente Torjusen notes that the show came about primarily through the efforts of Meier-Graefe. Meier-Graefe was a friend of Munch's and also published a portfolio of eight etchings by Munch in 1895. This same Meier-Graefe wrote the first Vallotton monograph in 1898. Torjusen, p. 196.

<sup>108</sup>The paintings Strindberg discussed were Baiser, Cheveux Rouges, Jalousie, Conception, Cri, Crépuscule, Trimurti de la Femme, and Le Rivage. From the diagram Strindberg uses to describe one of the paintings, it is clear that what he calls Trimurti de la Femme is the Three Stages of Woman. Langaard reproduces the actual page from the Revue Blanche (June 1, 1896), p. 366.

<sup>109</sup>Natanson seems to have been a great admirer of Norwegians in general. His desire to read Ibsen in the original prompted him to learn Norwegian and he actually translated one of his plays into French. Russell, p. 31.

<sup>110</sup>There were other means by which Munch's work was visible in Paris in the 1890s. In 1897 he showed a few works (undetermined) at a show "L'Art Cosmopolite," 18, rue Tronchet, Paris. (Johan H. Langaard and Reidar Revold, Edvard Munch Fra Ar til Ar, (A Year by Year Record of Edvard Munch's Life, Oslo, 1961, p. 27).



In addition, Munch designed two programs for Théâtre de l'Oeuvre productions of Ibsen plays in 1896 and 1897. Interestingly, Paal Hougen believes that Munch's portrait of Ibsen on the J.G. Borkman program of 1897 was based on Vallotton's portrait of the playwright. Paal Hougen, Edvard Munch and Henrik Ibsen, Northfield, Minnesota, 1978, p. 13.

<sup>111</sup>George Heard Hamilton, Painting and Sculpture in Europe, 1880-1940, Baltimore, 1967, p. 74.

<sup>112</sup>Hermann refers to Vallotton's complete and startling objectivity.  
p.

<sup>113</sup>Meier-Graefe, pp. 48-49.

<sup>114</sup>This final discussion of the individual Intimités is broadly organized along the lines of subject matter and within that framework, by sub-categories which reflect Vallotton's various approaches to his subject. In grouping related prints, the intention is to avoid repeating the same points for similar prints. Rather than discussing every aspect of each print, those qualities of the Intimités which can best be illustrated by individual prints are focused upon while others are left to be discussed in the context of other prints.

<sup>115</sup>Fortunately, preparatory drawings survive for most of the Intimités.

<sup>116</sup>"Dessins et Graveurs de Félix Vallotton 1865-1925," Lausanne, 1954, n.p.

<sup>117</sup>In the same vein Thadée Natanson wrote of this print "Tout ce que peut exprimer la violence tragique d'une tache noire se concentre dans L'Argent." Revue Blanche, Jan. 1, 1899, as cited in Guisan and Jakubec I, p. 255.

<sup>118</sup>August Strindberg, Father, in A Treasury of Theater, New York, 1935, pp. 801-829.

<sup>119</sup>Ibid., p. 811.

<sup>120</sup>In a painting which closely follows this woodcut, now in Baltimore, The Lie, 1898, Vallotton returns to the corner of the preparatory drawing and eliminates the picture on the wall. This may serve to support the theory of the function of the picture.

<sup>121</sup>Hofmann, p. 348.

<sup>122</sup>St. James, 1978, p. 15.

<sup>123</sup>Strindberg, Father, pp. 818-820.

<sup>124</sup>de Maupassant, p. 39.

<sup>125</sup>While the painting was not among those exhibited with the Indépendants, it could have been shown at Bing's or at the "L'Art Cosmopolite" show.

<sup>126</sup> Again, there is no solid proof that the print was on exhibition in Paris in the 1890s. However, given that some fifty of Munch's prints were shown at Bing's in 1896, it seems quite possible that Ashes was among them.

<sup>127</sup> Torjusen also notes Munch's use of Vallotton's characteristic device in this print. Torjusen, p. 195.

<sup>128</sup> That the configuration of black and white within this frame is not merely random may be established by the preparatory drawing which shows the same image.

<sup>129</sup> These titles were listed on the preparatory drawing.

<sup>130</sup> Anaïs Nin, Delta of Venus, New York, 1978, p. 252.

<sup>131</sup> Paintings entitled Baiser were exhibited at the Bing show of 1896 and at the 1897 Indépendants.

<sup>132</sup> Another parallel can be found in the use of animal fur in each to suggest sensuality, the cat in one and the bear rug in the other.

<sup>133</sup> l'emotion  
la belle epingle  
le triomphe  
le mensonge  
l'éclat  
l'argent  
la course pressée (La Raison Probante)  
les grands moyens (Le Grand Moyen)

<sup>134</sup> Exhibited at Bing's show in 1896. Strindberg called it Le Rivage in his review in the Revue Blanche.

<sup>135</sup> Also exhibited at Bing's; Strindberg called it Trimurti de la Femme.

<sup>136</sup> "Quelques bois originaux et inédits de Marval Lewitska, Eug. Corneau, R. Dufy, Gabriel Fournier, Othon-Friesz, A. Favory, R. de la Fresnaye, J.E. Laboureur, A. Lhote, J. Marchand, A. Mare, Marcel-Gaillard, L Nainssieux et Vallotton." Paris, as cited in Vallotton et Goerg, p. 219.

<sup>137</sup> Thérive, p. xv.

<sup>138</sup> St. James, 1978, pp. 23-4.

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